

ADVENT REFLECTION

DEVOUT AND EXPECTANT DELIGHT

One of the great joys of my Diaconate is witnessing marriage vows. Walking with couples as they prepare for their big day and witnessing them proclaim lifelong love moves me deeply.

During marriage prep, they often share with me their desire to “do life” together. And they seem to know that such life will be filled with laughter and tears, deep joy and great loss. They don’t appear to me to be as *blinded* by love, as they are *compelled* by it. Their previous anxiety as singles about “how their life will turn out” has been transformed, where the joy of being on the journey with each other is now more important than the circumstances that life may offer up along the way.

It reminds me of my own Engaged Encounter weekend. I shared with my then-fiancée my insecurities about being a young, 21-year-old punk who wasn’t sure how I would provide for us. Carla looked at me and said: “*You do know that I’d rather eat beans with you, than filet mignon with anyone else, right?*” This stunning affirmation of her love for me continues to ring in my head as we approach our 40th wedding anniversary this December. We have experienced a life filled with many circumstances, some great and some no-so-much, and through it all, we were in it together. We would not trade the journey we have been blessed to share for any other destination.

Advent is a season of ***devout and expectant delight***. This may sound naïve amid the circumstances of COVID-induced health and financial concerns. Or in the wake of the civil unrest and division our nation has endured. Or perhaps for many, a family diagnosis or trial that has become all-consuming of our attention. It is only naïve if we assume that we are to have *devout and expectant delight* about our circumstances in this life. One where God is our Santa Claus whose job it is to make everything here better.

But that is not what Advent is about. Like two people who choose *first* to be in *relationship*, *devout and expectant delight* is being reminded that our first and foremost identity is that of Beloved. The Father’s and the Son’s Beloved.

Are we dancing in delight this Advent the way a bride and groom dance at their wedding, even though they have no idea how the circumstances of their lives will turn out? Are we transformed, such that our joy of being on the journey with Jesus is now more important than the circumstances that life may offer up along the way? Are we living in each moment so as to make God’s love incarnate in ourselves and to those we meet?

May this Advent be a stunning affirmation of our core identity, of our most fundamental relationship, of our indescribable value, evidenced by God’s longing to ***be with us***. When this

sinks in, really sinks in, we will know in the depths of our heart the devout and expectant delight of Advent!

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