

DOING WITHOUT, WAITING, ANTICIPATING

Advent is a time of preparation, traditionally, for the birth of the Savior. It is by definition a season of waiting—but not just passive “hanging around” but active expectation of what is to come (more on that in another article). It is fundamentally a season of hope, and as St. Paul reminds us, “Hope is not hope if its object is seen” (Rom. 8:24). So we wait expectantly.

It is for this reason that “doing without” is a good practice to engage us in the process of hopeful longing. How do we do this liturgically?

First of all, during Advent the *Gloria* is not sung (except on special feasts and solemnities). Why should we do away with this lovely angelic hymn? Precisely because that is what it is: the song of the angels announcing the birth of the Savior (Lk. 2:8-14). The *Gloria* will return in all its glory (bad pun, I know) on Christmas as we join the song of the angels in praising the Lord.

A smaller act of expectation is in our refusal to use the most beloved of all this season’s hymns, *O Come, O Come Emmanuel*, until the 2nd half of Advent. Not only does this “push our buttons” and get us impatient; there is a more liturgical reason for waiting. This hymn is based on the “O Antiphons” which introduce the *Magnificat* in the Evening Prayer of the Liturgy of the Hours for the octave leading up to Christmas. So if we wait until 17 December (more or less!) we are not only trying our patience but also aligning more closely with the worship practice of the universal Church.

Again, since the theme of the season is expectant hope, we use the Taizé chant *Wait for the Lord* as our entrance hymn for all four Sundays—we don’t need a hymnal for this, so we can enter into the prayer of the singing and encourage ourselves truly to wait, to “be strong, take heart.”

This spirit is completely foreign to the commercial view of the United States especially, where I actually heard *O Come, All Ye Faithful* in the speaker system of a store some time before Halloween! After all, if we can’t make money out of Christmas, what good is it? And if we can make money, why wait??

The answer to that comes from what is perhaps a surprising source: an OT reading for funerals from the Book of Lamentations. I encourage you to read Lam. 3:17-26 to see what the sacred author thought about waiting patiently for the LORD. Happy Advent—happy waiting—happy expectation of the bounty only the LORD can bring!