



December 1, 2013 First Sunday of Advent

"You know the time;" Romans 13:11

Today on the liturgical calendar we begin the New Year of Grace 2014. In the cycle of the Scripture readings we are in the year of Matthew (cycle A). That means for a good portion of the year we will be hearing from The Gospel of Matthew. Matthew is concerned with presenting Jesus in his context. He uses often the phrase "that it might be fulfilled." In other words, not only is everything previous to us completed in Jesus; we are also completed in Jesus.

Dear Friends;

As I was reflecting on the readings for this Sunday the words of the music group Chicago (everything makes me think of song lyrics) kept coming to me. The song was called "Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?"

And I was walking down the street one day
being pushed and shoved by people trying to
beat the clock, oh, no I just don't know
I don't know, and I said, yes I said

(I don't) Does anybody really know what time it is
does anyone really care (about time)
If so I can't imagine why (Oh no, no)...

The lyrics speak of the conflict the speaker has between what he feels and those around him who are driven by the demands of work and time.

The Greek language (the language of the New Testament) has two words for "time," *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* is marked or measured time. This is the time measured by the clock and calendar. Our word 'chronological' comes from *chronos*.

Kairos is experiential or psychological. It is expressed in sayings like "time stood still" or "my whole life flashed before my eyes." When someone inquires about your vacation they don't ask "How many days was your vacation?" (That is chronology.) Rather, don't they ask, "How was your vacation?" They want to know about the experience (*kairos*). And when someone asks, "How was your vacation?" You don't respond, "five days." Rather, you say "We had a marvelous time, the beach was so relaxing, the food was delicious, and the kids had so much fun..." or you could say "It was a disaster..." It was not the quantity but the quality of the experience that you share.

The Season of Advent is not an invitation to enter into chronological time and look at the clock. It is an invitation to enter into the experience that is Jesus. Jesus is the event that has split history into "before" and "after." The life, death and resurrection of Jesus have seized us. It has changed everything. This is what the Letter to the Romans is saying. The time of which St. Paul speaks is *kairos*—the eternal now.

We experience a love that grabs us and holds us. It is, as if, our faith in Jesus has made time stand still. And in this moment a new kind of world is being formed. This world comes when we have given up violence and war and replace it with love. Isaiah tells us that the requirement for the coming Reign of God is that we change our weapons of destruction into tools to feed the hungry. For those who have faith that time is now! We must change! We must wage peace!

Today's passage from Matthew indicates what in the end will separate us. Some will seize the moment and live the life of the Kingdom; others will miss it. They were too busy marking time and punching the clock. Let us seize the moment, let us grab life and cling to Jesus, now! Philip James Baily expresses it in this way:

We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths
in feelings, not in figures on a dial.
We should count time by heart throbs: he lives most
who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.

Peace,

Fr. Ron