

Today is the beginning of a new *year* in the life of the *church* –

The first Sunday of *Advent* –

*Advent* – meaning *coming* –

And *all* the readings today call us to actively *await* the Lord's coming –

Coming *not* only in the *manger* on Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> –

But coming into our *hearts* –

*Today* – and *every* day – until Christ comes *again* at the end of *time*.

But while time still *exists* – and while we go to sleep in the dark and *awake* with the light –

*We* are called to be a people of *HOPE* –

Hope in *Christ* as our light –

Even *in* the dark.

Let's *ask* Jesus to *set* our hearts on fire with Hope in *His* light –

And let that light shine for *all* who grope for the way through darkness.

Now I would once *again* like to share part of a homily

From Monsignor Moroney from the *Worcester* Diocese.

He *urges* us to *wait* with *eager* and *open* hearts –

Letting *Christ* come to *steal* them for *Himself* –

Only to burn *brightly* with hope even in our *mundane* *daily* *lives* –

Coming *alive* in ways *beyond* our *greatest* hopes.

The Monsignor said:

“We all *ache* for God – and we *wait*...

The *addict* – in the alley behind the Cathedral *waits*:

for a God who will come and remove all that *enslaves* him...

The single *mother* *waits*:

for a day when she no longer has to work more than 54 hours a week –

For a *night* – when she can sleep for *eight* of those hours;

For a *life* – when she’ll finally know the kids will be *ok*.

The *soldier* in a *ditch*... *waits*:

for a morning when there are no more explosions,

and every look is not feared as the precursor to an *assault*,

and you don’t have to bury your new best *friends*.

The old man in the *nursing* home *waits*:

for the day he will no longer be *alone*,

when *pain* will no longer be his most constant *companion*,

and when he can once again *rest* in the embrace of her whom he *loved*.

The *prisoner* on death row *waits*:

for a place where he will no longer be seen as *evil*;

for a life that makes *sense*;  
for a time when love can be given and received,  
for the coming of a God who will love him.

The *investment* banker **waits**:

For the day when he's not gripped by the fear  
That he's about to lose everything;  
For the day when he can count his *value*  
In the quality of his *love* rather than the size of his *profit*.

The little *child* **waits**

within her mother's *womb*:  
for a world that will *welcome* her.  
and *parents* that will *love* her,  
and a community who will *nurture* her.

We *all* **wait** – in joyful *hope*,  
with bated *breath*,  
from our *routine* streets in our *ordinary* lives – we *stop* – and we *gaze* toward the Eastern skies,  
in *expectation* of the *One* who *comes* to the holy *mountaintop*...  
calling us to *awake* – and to *climb* – and we cry out:

“*come, let us walk in the light of the Lord!*”

Yet He *waits* for us – in that *confessional*,  
ready to *embrace* us,  
to pick us *up*, on his shoulders, and carry us *home* to Himself.

*Longing* to be loved,  
*orphaned* by our infidelity and broken promises,  
we cry out “Why do you let us *wander* and *harden* our hearts?”

Yet he *waits* on that altar, to *feed* us with himself,  
and to *make* us sons and daughters of his Father,  
to *live* in us, that *we* might live in *Him*.

Frightened that we have been abandoned,  
strangers in a strange desert,  
we cry out:

“Let us *see* your *face* and we will be *saved!*”

Yet he *waits* for us – in the *poor*, the *sick*, and the *young* and the *old*,  
*ready* to console our frightened spirits.

We wait in *joyful hope*.

The part of us that is afraid to confess that secret sin.

The part of us that doesn't think it's possible to forgive what '*that one*' did,

or that God could really forgive *me*,

or the part that refuses to *face* our sin or to *dare* to *change*;

The part of us that cries or *sighs* in the middle of the night.

The part which feels *empty* and *alone*.

The part that's *overwhelmed* and confused and *tired*.

The part which – amidst all the din and doubt – *waits*...

waits in silence – for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ – our great *light* in the darkness –

*Stay awake*, my friends, *Stay awake*!

“Throw *off* the works of *darkness* – Put on the armor of *light* –

Go to confession,

*celebrate* the Sacred Mysteries, and *pray*!

*Feed* the poor.

Go *visit* the *imprisoned* and the *aged-and-infirmed*.

Give *birth* to Christ by planting the seeds of *hope* in the *fertile* hearts of the young.

Find the one you've not yet *forgiven*, and call him or her right *now*.

Make your heart a *manger* to *receive* your king,

For he *is* coming.

He is coming, very soon!