

Carly Simon had that song in 1971, "Anticipation". A song of wanting to be with her love, but having to wait, and hesitating as well.

There was a cute Heinz Ketchup commercial in 1979, two boys going to place the ketchup on a burger, and because it is so thick, and presumably tasty, they have to wait for it to fall onto the burger. There is this visual of a drop of Ketchup about to drip onto the burger. Meanwhile in the background we hear the chorus of Carly Simon's song.

There is an ongoing scientific test in which pitch, a tar like substance, is being dripped. Each drip takes around 69 years to happen, the last drip was in 2009. Scientists wait for this to happen; and most scientists involved in this will never actually see it happen. Can you imagine?

Advent is a season of Anticipation. It is not like Lent, a season of penitence. Advent challenges us to anticipate, to consider what is to come and to prepare ourselves for what is to come.

On one level, we anticipate the feast of Christmas. We anticipate the feast in which we remember and make present the Incarnation of the Son of God. We prepare through our prayers, our worship, and of course through lights, gift buying, cooking making, and other festivities.

However, Advent calls us to anticipate beyond the feast of Christmas 2024.

What do we hope for in Jesus Christ? What do we hope for by striving to be Catholic?

Some people hope for a Christian Nation, a political power, wealth and status... these are NOT Christian-Catholic hopes and dreams of Jesus Christ.

Some just hope to get into heaven. No a bad hope. It is one we have had for millennia as Christians. So our efforts can be focussed on this; we monitor our behaviors, we confess regularly, we come to mass...

But there is more to Jesus and faith and being Catholic, more than getting into heaven. Salvation means more; living as a disciple of Jesus means more than this.

After all Christmas is not just eating cookies and opening gifts right?

Jesus, throughout the Gospels, speaks of a way of life in this world. Jesus preaches, teaches and lives a way to live life in this world; with a wisdom that guides us in our choices and actions; with a moral code that brings life to and for others; with a manner that engenders love for others and love from others.

Do we anticipate this? Do we even consider this?

The Kingdom of Heaven that Jesus proclaims is not just a reality beyond this world; it is to be a reality in the here and now. A kingdom, as Jesus acted to bring about, of forgiveness, of mercy and kindness, of welcoming and generosity, of self-giving for the good of others.

A kingdom in which our hearts are awakened to the Spirit, awakened to the Love of God and inspired to act; to make a difference; to resist the evil in this world that seeks to punish, kill, reject, to be self-centered.

Throughout the Scriptures God presented a better way to live; and humanity has struggled in this. We often conflated our own egos, our own desires with that of God. It led to corruption and sometimes disasters for people.

God never, ever gave up on humanity. Sending the prophets to the people to remind them of God's love; reminding them of the restoration that will happen.

God, when the time was right, sends the beloved Son, to offer us hope, something to work for, to anticipate; a fullness of life. Jesus is The Sacramental sign of God's love for all of us.

I know it can be difficult to hope; to think that good can happen as we continue to watch wars happen, children dying from bombs or starvation;

as we maybe anticipate chaos in this country with the many changes talked about; as people we love get sick and die.

Our hearts can become heavy, closed off. We can retreat into our own little worlds, or simply want to do the minimum. We can think why even bother, it is all too much.

Scripture, the Gospel calls out to us. Keep our hearts alive! Anticipate and work for love, for goodness, for true justice in which the human person, all human persons are respected, treated with dignity, no matter the circumstances of their conception, birth or life.

The Beauty of our Christian Faith is not that it is Utopian, but that it does challenge us to use the values within to create a better world. There truly is a depth to following Jesus as Catholics that challenges us to open up our minds and hearts to think, see and act differently, better; to love.

There are many out there too who anticipate our changed hearts. Those who struggle to make a decent living; those who have fled war and oppression and look for a better way of life; those who mourn their dead; those who are scared; those who are lost in this world, our youth especially.

Anticipate a better way of life; anticipate a heart in each of us that is filled with the divine love that inspires us to consider not just our own needs, but those of others.

Anticipate the Spirit of Christ, born into us, renewed in us each day.