

**December 8, 2017**

**“The Thrill of an Unconventional Christmas”**

As some may know, the Del Webb Corporation has built a number of senior retirement communities. Each one of these cities is impeccably designed and is almost a portrait of perfection. I visited Sun City West for the Georgetown Chamber of Commerce about twenty years ago and found the Sun City to be disconcertingly flawless. There was no trash on the grounds and everything was built to certain very precise specifications. Against the backdrop of the perfection of the Sun City concept was a story that I think captures our Advent theme of waiting and watching with joy and expectation.

Martin was our assigned bus driver for our trip. Martin drives groups around for the Arizona Limousine service—he had a very nice uniform. We were on our way to the airport when Martin told us a great story. Martin said it was his most exciting trip ever.

It seems that the prior summer there were terrible forest fires in the mountains east of Phoenix. The US Forest Service needed plenty of firefighters delivered in the wilderness. So, as odd as it sounds, Martin delivered plenty of firefighters in his twenty-five-passenger limo-bus. They were taken over logging roads with fires burning all around them. Martin said it was the most interesting driving he had ever done.

When Martin dropped off the firefighters the head firefighter said: “pick us up here at 6:00.” With no roads, no road signs, and the few distinct landmarks being burned all the while, Martin said he wondered how he would find his fares in the firefight. He concluded by saying, “In the midst of the fire I forgot to look how I got to the fire. I couldn't even remember by which tree I let them off.”

Within the Arizona wilderness Martin had experienced something that got his blood pumping. My Advent prayer for us is that we too might come to appreciate at this Advent season the wilderness.

“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”

Perhaps this Advent instead of trying to embrace the perfection beyond our understanding and ability, that we may look to the wilderness for a better symbol of the life we have before us. Anyway, that is God's real story and I am sticking to it.

**Come—Worship; Stay—Learn; Go—Serve**