



Fisch-ing Lines

by Deacon Howard Fischer

Every year it seems that the celebration of Christmas gets farther away from its very reason for existence: celebrating the great love of a God who cared so much for his wayward creatures that he became one of them in order to save them!

On this event all of human history hinges and all human existence is transformed. Yet every year we lament how commercial Christmas has become...while we rush around making sure that we have purchased enough presents for all of our family and friends.

We are not helpless victims in this process. We can control our destiny and return our own observance of Advent and Christmas to its spiritual roots. So instead of bemoaning the commercialization, let's take back our spirituality through small, decisive choices! During the season of Advent we need to remember that we are doing more than preparing to celebrate Jesus' coming into human history 2000 years ago. Advent and Christmas are also celebrations of his presence among us *here and now*, and so we must create some room for him to enter more fully into our daily lives. And we do all this while at the same time looking forward to Christ's coming in glory at the end of time. Advent is a season of "yesterday, today and tomorrow." We are missing the boat if we see this season as simply a grand celebration of Jesus' birthday.

The "today" and "tomorrow" dimensions of Advent mean that this time is to be spent in *active* waiting and preparation. Ours is not a culture that encourages patient waiting. We want no lines, quick service, immediate gratification. The invitation of Advent, however, is to practice waiting faithfully.

In the movie "Mrs. Brown," Queen Victoria has fallen into a deep depression after the death of her husband Albert when her advisers come up with an idea. They send for her pony to be brought to Balmoral, accompanied by a handsome Scot named John Brown. She is not interested in being cheered up and is infuriated when she looks out on the courtyard to see John Brown standing at attention beside her saddled pony. Day after day Victoria refuses to

go down. Day after day he returns. Finally she sends someone to tell him that she is not now and may never be interested in riding. John Brown is unmoved. "When Her Majesty does wish to ride," he says, "I shall be ready."

John Brown shows the attitude Jesus is looking for in our faith life. Can we say, "When His Majesty, God, does come, I shall be ready"?

To be ready, you and I must practice active waiting for the Lord's coming. This sounds like a contradiction, but our waiting for Jesus is not meant to be a time of standing around idle while gazing off to heaven. I am reminded of the old saying, "Some people are so heavenly-minded they're no earthly good." The concepts of heaven and earth don't clash if we stop seeing them as two distinct places. Jesus wants us to have heaven here on earth by seeing him in the poorest, the lowliest, the most overlooked. In helping our sisters and brothers in need, we spend our time in anticipation of the Lord's arrival by doing his work.

During Advent (and beyond) let us devote the same passion that we pour into holiday shopping into some true, heavenly preparation by visiting the lonely neighbor grieving the loss of a loved one, by stocking the local food pantry, by toning down the violence and rhetoric of our society, by defending the oppressed, by supporting the St. Vincent de Paul Society, Catholic Charities, Catholic Relief Services and other charities who provide aid to those experiencing hardship. In this way you and I will not be caught napping when the moment of the Lord's arrival comes. Let us be ready. If you wish to contact me, please leave a note in the Parish Office or send an email to deaconhwf99@yahoo.com.