

Father Dave's Homily

12/2/12 1 Advent C

-- Peter Feldmeier (UT Catholic Theology Professor) tells a tale about a man who died and met St. Peter in a room just outside heaven. The room had a wall, and just beyond the wall was the heavenly kingdom.

-- St. Peter explained that there was a door in the wall which only opened up once a year, and only for a moment. It could happen within minutes, a few hours, or even months from then. You would be able to walk right into heaven if you are watching.

-- But if you miss it, you wouldn't have a chance until the next year. You had to be attentive.

-- This story tells us something about our life with God. In one sense, we are already saved. Heaven is promised us through Jesus Christ. But we have to watch. It also tells us a lot about our opportunities in life.

-- As a priest, I know that some people come into my life whom I may never see again. Often they have a need, perhaps just to be listened to. And I have that one opportunity to impact their lives, positively or negatively.

-- Each of us runs into similar opportunities. They are the signs in the sun and the stars which our gospel speaks about today. A chance meeting with someone can change our life. An opportunity for spiritual growth may come from some small event announced in the bulletin or placed on the Church bulletin board.

-- We can't force these opportunities. They come over time, and we must wait patiently for them. Yet, if we are distracted by other concerns, such as our Christmas shopping or schedule planning, we may miss them.

-- Advent is a time of waiting, a waiting that is patient and active at the same time. Annie Dillard tells a story about this waiting. She was fascinated by the way a butterfly emerged from its cocoon. But it's a slow process, and she became impatient with it.

-- So she got a candle to gently warm the cocoon in order to hasten the process. And it worked. The butterfly came out quickly.

-- Immediately, though, she noticed something wrong. The wings of the butterfly weren't sufficiently developed. It was too weak to fly. She had short-circuited the process.

-- We are tempted to short-circuit so many good things in life. We don't want to wait for our Christmas presents, for the consummation of a marriage, for the completion of life's goals. But these take time. And that time must be respected.

-- Advent is a season of honoring that time. How do we, as Christians, do that? St. Paul has some good advice: allow the Lord's love to increase in your life, keep seeking his strength, continue to conduct yourselves as the Lord would want you to.

-- Our gospel tells us not to let the anxieties of daily life get the best of us. Don't allow yourself to be ruled by artificial fixes, whether alcohol, drugs, sex, excessive possessions, power or any human crutch.

-- That way we will be attentive to God's presence in the world and the opportunities he offers us in life. And when that door to heavenly life opens up, we will be ready....we will not miss the opportunity.