

Advent 2

It takes five years for the seed of a bamboo tree to show any growth above ground. And then it grows to an amazing height of 90 feet in just six weeks. It seems worth the wait.

Watching and waiting are associated with Advent. Psalm 130 puts it like this: "like the watchman waits for sunrise, I am waiting for the Lord" – waiting in faith to reveal to us His saving power in a new way.

But waiting can be a real pain for some. For the impulsive, solutions to problems must be found immediately. Road rage is on the rise. I sometimes say to impatient drivers, 'tis better to be five minutes late than dead on time'. Parents are worried that today's children are growing up too fast. At the other end of life, when older people are taking their time dying, the temptation is to speed up the process.

When St Paul was describing the qualities of love it's no surprise that top of the list was the virtue of patience. We often describe a good person as having the patience of a saint.

However, even though we may not be very good at waiting, our Divine Lord is quite the opposite. He's all the time in the world. *'The Lord is patient with us, wanting nobody to be lost but everybody to be brought to change his ways'* The watchman waits for sunrise because he's tired of the darkness. *But the day breaks gradually.* Valleys are not filled in nor mountains laid low at the drop of a hat.

In some of those Christian satellite channels, God is often portrayed as someone who, when called on, will instantly smooth out all the ruffles of life. God is not a magician. By and large he doesn't suspend the laws of nature. Saving the world was hard work. It took the life and death of God's only Son. Cutting corners is not God's way.

Jesus seemed embarrassed with the people who tried to crown him King after He miraculously fed the five thousand. Scripture tells us that after this miracle He beat a hasty retreat into the hills. I'm sure He didn't want to be seen as a man with a quick fix solution to every problem. Yes, he did perform miracles to show he was God but the excitement following his miracles soon wore off when they plotted against him prior to his Passion.

So we need to stop looking on God as an on-the-spot fixer of everything. His answer to our prayers may be extended until our faith is tested and our will gradually dovetails with His. This can be an uphill struggle for most. Growth in the life of the spirit is often a long and winding road which leads us away from self towards union with God. But, if we persevere, He will be with us every step of the way howsoever slow and taxing.

Just like the morning sun gradually intensifies as midday approaches so may we be steadily transformed as we await His coming at Christmas?