

Advent 2B

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 His saving power to us in a new way.

But waiting can be a real pain for some. For the impulsive, solutions to problems must be found immediately. The recent pandemic slowed everyone down which was no bad thing. Road rage is on the rise. I sometimes say to impatient drivers, 'isn't it better to be five minutes late than dead on time'. Educationalists these days are pushing adult themes on to children far too fast and not allowing them to enjoy their childhood. Lots of parents are worried about this. 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 is 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. Scripture says *'The Lord is patient with us, wanting nobody to be lost but everybody to be brought to change his or her 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 will instantly smooth out all the ruffles of life. God is not a magician. He's not in the business of 'pulling rabbits out of hats'. 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 quick fixer of every problem - an *abrica dabraca* man. Yes, he did perform miracles to show he was God but by and large changes in our lives can often be a long drawn-out arduous struggle.

But the struggle is worth it if what we ask for in prayer gradually dovetails with his design for our lives. His answer to our prayers may be put on hold until this happens. Growth in the life of the spirit is often a long and winding road which leads us gradually away from self towards deeper union with God. If we're sincere in our efforts He will be with us every step of the way howsoever slow or taxing.

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