

FEAR NOT: GOD IS FAITHFUL!

I saw this program on public TV the other day. It was about a family that came to realize that practically everything they had in their house was *made in China*. Most everything we now use is made in China. It was one of the reasons that we have a nagging unemployment of 9%. So for the month before Christmas, the family decided to live without anything *made in China*. They stripped everything in their house which was marked "*made in China*".

But when they let go of everything made in China, their lives seemed so empty! The children cried when they found out that most of their toys were *made in China*. The TV, VCR, and play station were *made in China*. All their china was *made in China* causing the family eat off of paper plates and drink out of paper cups for the month. They even discovered that the lights on their Christmas tree were all *made in China*.

The father in the family really missed not having lights on their Christmas tree and since the stores only sold lights *made in China*, he went out and bought wire and bulbs and plugs to make his own string of Christmas lights. It took him hours to finish making one string of lights which had only twenty lights on it... and it cost him over \$80 for the parts.

When the family Christmas shopping, they became totally frustrated finding that almost everything ... clothes, appliances, electronics and toys were *made in China*. And when they found some items made in Mexico or Europe or the USA, they were often much more expensive.

Life was hard without things *made in China*. The father in the family became so depressed that one day when the rest of the family was out shopping, he took out the play station which had been stored away and played videogames all day long. When reflecting why he did this, he said that the last few Christmases had been difficult times for him because he had recently lost his parents and really missed them. He found a deep emptiness in his life. Burying himself in videogames was a quick fix to temporarily relieve the pain.

Why do I tell this story about the family living “without things *made in China*”. We are beginning a very special season, the season of Advent, a time of waiting for the coming of the Lord. Advent is a time to realize that emptiness is a healthy and normal part of our lives. We will only find fullness of God’s presence if we first let emptiness have a home in us. We need to learn to be patient! We need to learn to wait—for each other, for love, for happiness, for God!"

Jesus warns us about those who are not empty, who do not wait, those who fill all their waking moments with cheap things and activities. They are like the people who lived in the time of Noah's time, They did not have time for God. They simply went their merry way. But Noah and his family waited on God's word; Noah listened; he and his family built their boat and their lives around his coming. They were saved when the great flood came to purify the earth.

Jesus says, "It will be like this when I come again. Those who aren't waiting for me will be left behind when I return." Any day now—who knows when?—we may die. What we need to be waiting for while we live is *Christ*. If we live in expectation of the Lord's coming for us, we will not be left behind on that day.

But we do not wait. We are not empty. We fill our lives with things toys large and small made in China. We sooth the emptiness of our hearts, with things which cannot ultimately satisfy us. As St. Paul says we fill our hearts with things of the night, activities we are not very proud of.

We know what kind of things happen at night in our city. Streets clatter with shouts and gunfire, sometimes even until the break of dawn. Debaucheries, betrayals, carousing are heard faintly in the distance. As St. Paul reminds us “the night is far spent,”; we hear people stumbling home from wild desires which sound a city night’s death-knell.

**Christians are called to stand in the emptiness,
We, too, stand up in the dark,
but we stand with our faces lit up by the coming dawn.**

Paul calls us to be ready to cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. We can live “as in the day,” even though we actually are still in the night. We can only live through the night, if we are looking to the coming light of Christ which gives us new life.

(Pause)

There is a beautiful poem by J. Janda reflecting on this Advent season reflecting on our fears and sadness in this season. She says:

You can do nothing without me

why do you keep trying to do things alone?

....

all I ask is that you talk to me

tell me why you are sad

tell me why you are afraid

tell me why you are tired

come to me

—I will refresh you

Theme of our Advent Season is: FEAR NOT: GOD IS FAITHFUL!

In order to enter the emptiness of the Advent season with joyful hearts, we need to do two things.

First, we need to identify our fears so that they do not control us.

Second, we need to welcome Christ into our lives.

We need to base our happiness not in things made in China but on the gifts of God.

Today I plead with you to do two things to make this Advent season fruitful.

- **First: Write down what causes us fear in our lives:**
 - (in pew) loss of toys; loss of friends; loss of health
 - Celebrate the Sacrament of Penance; What causes us to fill the voids of our lives with idle games and deeds of darkness; let us cast aside the things of darkness; live honorably as in the day.
- **Second: Place our trust in the Lord**
 - Jesse Tree (read from book)
 - Prayer (Sunday mass)
 - Small books

This Advent season God's words to us are simple: he says:

all I ask is that you talk to me

tell me why you are sad

tell me why you are afraid

tell me why you are tired

come to me

—I will refresh you

My brothers and sisters, FEAR NOT; GOD IS FAITHFUL