



## *Reflection from Ben Babaran*

The season of Advent is a time of waiting. I have learned a lot about waiting and I have grown accustomed to it. I waited in excitement for the birth of our children. I anxiously waited for the recommendation of my cardiologist that led to my bypass heart surgery. Multiple times I waited with uncertainty when I dropped off my in-laws for their doctor's appointments. All the waiting challenged me to plan and prepare. That's why the readings for this First Sunday of Advent appeal to me.

God tells Jeremiah, "I will fulfill the promise I made." Paul addresses the Thessalonians, "Strengthen your hearts. . .at the coming of Our Lord Jesus." Jesus tells his disciples, "Be vigilant. . .pray that you have strength." I am comforted by these directives, for I know God understands my restlessness while waiting.

Advent provides a wonderful opportunity to consider what is going on inside me, to reflect on the reason for my waiting. In addition, I can examine how I wait: for the coming of Jesus, the coming of LOVE. It is a season of preparation – preparing my heart for the arrival of Jesus even beyond Christmas.

In another sense, it is a time to reflect specially on our liberation from the shackles of sin and bondage. We all want to be liberated – free from many situations that hold us down. However, many times we misconstrue the meaning of freedom or liberation.

I have heard people say, "Nobody can take away my freedom. Even my doctor cannot deny me the freedom to eat and drink whatever I want. No one can stop me from doing whatever I want to do." This is a very wrong notion of freedom. I, personally, believe there is no true freedom without God. True liberty or freedom comes from God's grace through Jesus Christ.

This Advent, as we joyfully wait for the coming of Jesus, may He deliver us from the bondage of falsehood, fear and anxiety, apathy and anger. May we heed the call of St. Paul in the second reading: "love one another more than ever, conduct yourselves to be pleasing before the Lord, and to be blameless in His sight."

*~ Peace,*

*Ben*