

**"Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord." (Homily)**

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**"Be patient, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord."**

This weekend, we celebrate Gaudete Sunday, the mid-point of our Advent journey. We light the rose candle, symbolizing our hope in joy to come. It shines in a dark world, where hope is elusive for most, and extinguished for many.

"Lord, Lord, we need hope! Send us your hope! Send it now! And some joy! In fact, lots of it! Jolly us up!! Now!! Don't delay!!" Have you ever heard this prayer? Have you ever prayed this prayer? Are you, perhaps, praying it now? I, for one, am not.

I am not, for I have come to appreciate the lesson in the letter of Saint James we read today. And the lesson is this: Patience and hope go hand-in-hand: No patience, no hope; no hope, no patience.

It took me a while to learn this, so impatient was I as a young man, and of course, so despairing, but God led me by the hand until I "got it," until I made the connection. And it happened in a way so strange that only God could have been the author of the tale...

When I was 27, I finished my dissertation with high hopes for a distinguished career in the health sciences. I applied for a hospital job and was hired by a physician I will refrain from naming. The physician had had a distinguished career himself, with accomplishment after accomplishment, high praises from patients and academics, alike, but one broken relationship after another, so strong was his personality, so impregnable his opinions. He once said to me, "Dr. Fulton, there are two kinds of people in the world: those who give ulcers and those who get ulcers. I am a member of the first group."

As a young man, I was impatient to save the world, but found my way blocked by the boss, who seemed to become more difficult by the day. Amongst friends, I referred to him as "Dr. No."

As my impatience grew, my hope of succeeding waned. Thus I threw away the potential my job held to do good, resigning after only six weeks. I heaped blame upon my now-former boss for glaring failures – as a manager and as a person. When I left his employ, I couldn't stand him.

God laughed.

Ten years later, working for the State, I was assigned to organize a small team of community planners. The "higher-ups," as we called them, gave me one instruction: "John, make this work." "No problem," I thought. All in all, the assignment was simple enough, and I took it on with high hopes. When I arrived at our first meeting, however, my hopes were immediately dashed. There was my nemesis, the ulcer-giver! "Oh, no!" I thought. "No escape. *Lord give me patience!*"

And he did! And as I used it, the team moved ahead, inch by inch, and my hope grew, bit by bit.

My hope proved to be warranted. My old nemesis and I finished the job – together! God had saved me from despair by giving me patience!

I pondered that lesson at the last meeting of our planning group, thanked the Lord for his kindness, for our success, and for freeing me, once again, from a most difficult person!

God just laughed again. (Do you see where this story is going?)

As it turned out, God positively *entwined* us, that physician and me, for the rest of our careers. But he also gave me patience, and with patience came hope. And that physician and I accomplished many things together.

Now, our collaboration is long over. You make think this strange, but I miss him very much. I have the greatest respect for him. I remember him with great affection.

What happened to us? To our relationship? How did God make our collaboration work? Was it the grace of patience that inspired hope? Or was it the grace of hope that inspired patience? Who can tell? Who can foresee God's plans?

But I can tell you this: Practice patience, and you will find hope! Hope in God, and you will find patience!

Remember this as you light the rose candle.

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### **James 5:7-10**

Be patient, brothers and sisters,  
until the coming of the Lord.

See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth,  
being patient with it  
until it receives the early and the late rains.

You too must be patient.

Make your hearts firm,  
because the coming of the Lord is at hand.

Do not complain, brothers and sisters, about one another,  
that you may not be judged.

Behold, the Judge is standing before the gates.

Take as an example of hardship and patience, brothers and sisters,  
the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.