



From the Office of the President

John P. Fitzgibbons, S.J.

REGIS UNIVERSITY | DENVER, COLORADO

**Homily for the Baccalaureate Mass
Third Sunday of Advent (A)
St. John Francis Regis Chapel
Regis University
December 15, 2013**

Readings:

Isaiah 35:1-6

James 5:7-10

Matthew 11:2-11

PATIENCE, hard thing! the hard thing but to pray,
But bid for, Patience is! Patience who asks
Wants war, wants wounds, weary his times, his tasks;
To do without, take tosses, and obey.

Rare patience roots in these, and, these away,
Nowhere. Natural heart's ivy, Patience masks
Our ruins of wrecked past purpose. There she basks
Purple eyes and seas of liquid leaves all day.

We hear our hearts grate on themselves: it kills
To bruise them dearer. Yet the rebellious wills
Of us we do bid God bend to him even so.

And where is he who more and more distils
Delicious kindness? - He is patient. Patience fills
His crisp combs, and that comes those ways we know.

-Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.

“Advent’s themes of happiness and hope can annoy someone who hurts. When you are burdened with the chaff of ego or the weight of anxieties, forced joy and canned glee disgust the best of persons” (Kavanaugh, “The Word Engaged,” 6).

We don’t like to be set up, teased, fooled. And so the words of James can seem a cruel joke. “Be patient. See how the farmer awaits the precious yield of the soil. He looks forward to it patiently while the soil receives the winter and spring rains. You, too, must be patient. Steady your hearts, because the coming of the Lord is at hand.”



Rather than feeling the exuberance of Isaiah, sensing the renewal of strength, the return of fresh spring, it seems just as likely to feel the fading not the blooming, feebleness not firmness, frailty not freedom (Kavanaugh, "The Word Embodied," 6).

John's question from his prison cell becomes our question from whatever chains we own. "Are you the one who is to come, or do we look for another?" And there, perhaps, is the key...What chains do you admit to? What binds you, imprisons you? Do you seek release and freedom?

It is in our poverty, in the areas where we lack freedom, that a love which is godly can be born. We, the image of the God who made us, are touched by our poverty in order to make everything all right. Only God can do this.

"In some way, Advent never lets go of us. The hold of Advent remains throughout the year. This is a truth I will not forget. But I admit I learn it anew every year...It is a truth that all of us on this earth must acknowledge, whether we are numbered among the 'poor of the world,' or our poverty is revealed only in our illness, our aging, or our dying" (8).

"We humans will always be in Advent" – not because our God is cruel or a tease – but because "we are creations unfinished and we await a second birth. Our final happiness and healing, rich or poor, will not be quarried here. We who believe that heaven once came down to earth also believe that every grace of the earth will be lifted to undying life by our God made flesh" (8). Such is the pattern of Jesus whom we call Christ. Such is the pattern of our lives.