

**December 23, 2012**

**Advent Four**

**Text: O Emmanuel (O *With Us is God*) The "O Antiphons"**

**Theme: "ERO CRAS –Tomorrow I Will Come"**

**O Emmanuel, our King and Lawgiver, the expectation of all nations and their Salvation: come and save us, O Lord our God.**

**During our midweek services, we have looked at the 7 names of Jesus used in the hymn, 'Oh Come, Oh Come Emmanuel.' I told you when we started that on this Sunday, I would reveal a surprise. There was a reason that I told you all the names in Latin. Sapientia, Adonai, Radix Jess, Clavis David, Oriens, Rex Gentium, Emmanuel. Take the first letter of each name starting from Emmanuel and going back to Sapientia and you have ERO CRAS which means, Tomorrow I will come. The building of these names into this acronym shows us how intently the early Church was looking for Christ to return. Especially in the season of Advent, they watched excitedly because it seemed so probable that he would surely be here this year!**

**The last antiphon is Emmanuel. "With us is God" would be what the people of God would shout from the streets when Jesus returns. After all the waiting and all the praying and all the enduring the mocking and scoffing of unbelievers, we will finally be able to shout, "With us is God!" Tomorrow I will come. But tomorrow does not seem to mean to Jesus what it means to us.**

**When my family moved to Arizona, my father had a rude awakening. He worked as a chemist in the copper mines and he oversaw a number of laborers who carried the ore samples in and out of the lab. Most of these laborers were Mexicans and, in the 70's, most were of questionable citizenship. My father had never encountered this culture. He was a WWII Naval Officer from the Northeast and for him being on time was late and being late was inexcusable. His Mexican workers had a new word for him to learn: mañana. Literally that means tomorrow but that is not really what they mean. It can mean just about any time but sometime in the future and not now.**

**"Hector, when are you going to bring me that pallet of ore I asked for last week?" my father was ask.**

**"Mañana, Señor Rogers, mañana ."** Apparently Hector did not have the same need for punctuality as my father did and working with Hector and his crew for a few years helped my father not to be as much of a slave to the clock and calendar as he once had been. He never got over it, but it helped so that by the time he was in his 70's, he no longer pitched a royal fit if dinner was at 6:00 instead of 5:30.

**When we speak of time, as human beings, we see differences in cultures. Some cultures understand time in terms of minutes and**

**seconds. Some cultures see time in the passage of seasons. Some generations, but none of us were prepared for waiting 2,000 years. Since we are all here today, just so you know, the Mayans were wrong and we are still waiting for tomorrow to come. And yet, perhaps we await that which is already here.**

**While Jesus has not yet returned to take us to paradise, he is already with us. Christianity celebrates the "now" and the "not yet". Obviously, the complete fulfillment of our salvation is not yet with us. That is the day of the resurrection. Just this week I was reminding a teacher that the students may have youth, but we have wisdom and in the end, wisdom always trumps youth. She said she wished we could have both and I said that is what we call heaven. It got to thinking about how often we wish for heaven without even thinking about what we are doing. I wish I could eat everything I want to eat and not weight 300 lbs. I wish I could have enough energy to do everything I want to do and still feel great. I wish I could let go of my anger and pain and just enjoy my life. All of that is the stuff of paradise. It is why we so eagerly look forward to his coming, but it is the not yet.**

**He is already with us now, though. He lives in his Word. He lives in the water and he lives in his very body and blood. We gather here to be with him in the best way we can while still on earth. Let**

**me be clear. God is not at soldier field, on a mountain top, out on the lake or any of the places people love to go for relaxation and recreation and claim that they are closer to God. If people are receiving his body and blood, remembering their baptisms and hearing his word in a dirty alley on the South Side, God is far more present there than on a sailboat on Lake Michigan where people are nursing Bloody Mary's, trying to overcome a hangover and remember what they did the night before. So don't justify skipping worship to commune with God someplace else. God is present where his Word is proclaimed and his Sacraments are administered whether in a prison, a church building or on a sailboat but the key is Word and Sacrament not a warm mushy feeling caused by scenery or vodka.**

**He is here with us. He has come to save us from despair as we await his return. We do not live a life that is separate from our life from him as though for now we are on our own and later he will be with us. He is with us now and tomorrow he will come. He is with us in the water, the word, the bread and the wine and tomorrow, whenever tomorrow is, he will come take us to be with him.**

**Mañana, Señor , mañana.**