

Advent offers opportunity for mindfulness

I do love the season of Advent. I find it encouraging in its invitation to remember the wonderful things God has done for us. I find it hopeful in its reminder that one day, when Christ comes again in glory, God will bring to completion all the good things begun in us.

We are all invited to be mindful of such themes during the Advent season. My hope is that all of us, even in the midst of our busy daily schedules, will find time to remember and to hope. Neither is easy because both call us away from the demands of the present moment. And we know that those demands, even when we realize that they are not important, can become urgent for us in a way that Advent's call rarely does.

How we cope with that challenge is, I suppose, a matter we have to decide for ourselves. What works well for one person may not be helpful for another. We're all different in temperament. The circumstances of our lives, our needs, histories and resources are all different.

But I expect that most of us will agree that life is too often faster-paced than is good for us and that we can at least encourage one another to make or to take advantage of opportunities to

along the way



BY BISHOP MATTHEW H. CLARK

reflect on life's deeper meaning.

Two lines of thought — one concerning a person; the other, an activity — are part of my preparation for Advent. The person is Father Ben Ehmann, one of our revered senior priests. I think of Ben these days because he is a shining example to me of people who invest in the challenge of life.

Ben seems never to stop searching for the truth, beauty or joy that life can offer. In his early 90s, he remains intellectually curious, involved in ministry with and to people of all ages, and delightfully open to the freshness life may offer him tomorrow.

There is little doubt in my mind that Ben loves life because he has always taken the time to remember, to hope and to pray. He knows what Christ already has done for him and through him, and doesn't want to miss the next good gift.

The activity is trying to develop some

reasonable, working acquaintance with the world of computers. Clearly, this is at a totally different level from drawing inspiration for life from Ben Ehmann. But it is helpful to me in many ways. For example, it challenges me to a task to which I bring little confidence but which, if completed successfully, will enable me to communicate better with others. It challenges me to a new system of logical thought and to learning what is the equivalent of another language.

The mechanics of the discipline remind me of the incipient arthritis in my aging hands and of how my eye-hand coordination is at least a quart and a half down from what it used to be.

If those realities somehow suggest the cost of the endeavor, my fond hope is that the process will also be a symbolic reminder to me of two important truths: that we often need to become like children in order to learn, and that to be alive is to change continually.

I hope that you will have a chance to remember and to hope during this Advent time. Perhaps you will find it helpful to think of the people and activities of your daily experience who put you in touch with themes of growth and becoming.

Peace to all.

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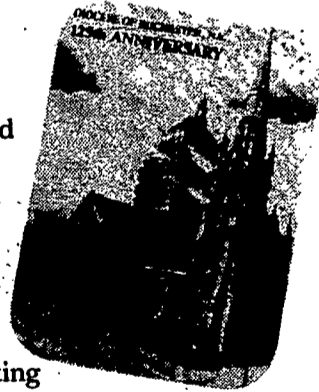
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