



My father was a gentle man who rarely made waves. However, although I am not sure if inherited that trait, he had another quality that I believe is in my genes. Whenever we would go visit relatives, we would have a nice visit, but it would not be long after the dessert had been served that he would announce in his Irish brogue, *it is time to shorten the road*-which meant let's go home. I have had enough. My mother would respond, *we just got here and* then he starts putting on his coat. Like many men, and women too for that matter, he suffered a bit from impatience. I recall a St. Patrick's Day in New York about ten years ago, when after marching the parade on a very cold day, a friend and I managed to get a cab that would take us to a Redemptorist rectory on the East side of Manhattan, where welcoming spirits and corned beef awaited us. We soon found ourselves in intolerable traffic, moving inch by inch. When we finally got within two blocks of the rectory, a trip that should have taken ten minutes that had gone for almost an hour, I announced, *we are out of here*, threw open the cab door and handed the cabbie his money. Unfortunately, I manage to bang the cab door into a limo that was parked. The limo driver got out shouting soon followed the angry cab driver. Luckily for me, the limo had to leave to pick up a client and cabbie saw the meter was no longer running so they both drove off waving what I think may have been unfriendly hand gestures toward me.

It is said that patience is a virtue, and one that I suspect about 99 percent of people need to deepen their practice of this quality. If you ask people their number one fault, impatience often makes the top of the list. It is a sin that we confessors are quite familiar hearing in the confessional. I think of patience during Advent, not just because of the long lines at stores, but rather in the spiritual context of the Jewish people awaiting the fulfillment of the long awaited Messiah. Today, which we call Gaudete Sunday, is the day we light the pink candle and the priest gets to look very stylish in rose colored chasuble. The pink colored candle speaks of anticipatory joy of our ancestors in faith as they announced, the time is now at here when He will come. John the Baptist, when asked if he is the long awaited messiah, answered them all, saying, *“I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

But you and I are not waiting for the Messiah to come. Jesus, the Son of God, entered into the world 2000 years ago, fully human and divine. He will come to us in a very real way in the Holy Eucharist at this Mass and at every Mass.

When the people ask John how they should respond to this good news, he tells them to treat one another with justice and compassion. Be honest and fair. I think the cause of many sins and hurts in life is the power that lacking patience can cause in our daily lives. I always say the sin is not what we feel but what that feeling might lead us to do or say that becomes hurtful to another person. Some examples might clarify what I mean:

You are in your car in the midst of traffic. The kids are in the back seat arguing over what video to watch or pushing each other to get more room. You explode in anger toward them, not because of what they are doing but because you are frustrated with a situation, traffic, that you have no control over.

You’ve been on hold for fifteen minutes listening to wretched boring music as your blood pressure rises, finally, you hear *Hello, and can I help you.* The strong temptation is to take your impatience out on stranger who is simply working to make a living.

You have a two o'clock appointment for the doctor. You get there at 1:45. You are asked to fill out the same questions that you have done ten times before. Your names is called an hour later and the nurse puts you in the little dreaded room, which has a scale staring at you, and tells you the doctor will be right with you. Finally the doctor arrives after another twenty minutes or so and takes your blood pressure and tells you it is a bit high. Are you under any stress?

It is ok to get impatient with commercials on TV, endless coming attractions at the movies, red lights, recorded phone calls selling you insurance at supper time, and I might even consider long sermons. However, we can ruin a dinner, devastate a person, leave someone in tears, say something we will quickly regret by giving into anger by allowing our impatience to overcome us.

We should be impatient with war, social injustice, institutional abuse of any kind and other evils and allow the emotion to direct us to move us to take whatever constructing action we can possibly take. But in truth, I think most often our impatience is pointed at people who do not deserve such treatment.

I remember years ago being in the Staten Island Mall at Macy at Christmastime. There was a long line to check out our items. I was about third on the line and a woman with a baby got impatient with the cashier and started criticizing her. The cashier responded with anger. The argument escalated as tempers rose. Finally, the cashier looked at the baby in the carriage and said to the mother, what are we doing. It is Christmas, you have a baby. With those words, peace broke out in Macy's.