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Waiting

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Waiting

In restaurants nowadays, "servers" is a more popular name than "waiters." And most servers or waiters give the appearance of being in constant motion, doing anything but waiting, unless perhaps for the food to be prepared. But we all know what it is like to wait for someone to keep an appointment, or for healing to take place when we have suffered an injury, or for time to pass as we anticipate a coming event. We are familiar with waiting.

When we reflect on our interior, spiritual experiences we will be able to distinguish some of the different modes of waiting that we utilize, since we only have freedom to choose what we will think, say or do and do not have control over most of the environment that encompasses us. For some of us, patience is not our favorite manner of dealing with issues that we would prefer to resolve as soon as possible. But waiting until we know it is the more appropriate moment to act, rather than always responding immediately, is a habit we might wish to develop, for it provides us with a welcome alternative to the frustration of not having what we want as soon as we want it.

Waiting is an active spiritual practice, not passive, and is also a positive experience when our decisions are founded in honest desires to deal with the particular and present realities as best we can. We find much more satisfaction when we adapt ourselves to circumstances than when we try to force people or events to match an idea that we have in mind at the moment. Imagine (or perhaps recall) standing at a stove or a toaster with all our impatient focus of attention on what we want, now. Alternatively, imagine being in the same location, but having decided to either do something else for a short time, or to use the time for reflecting on the gifts that are everywhere around us, of food and drink, of possibilities and options. We do not have to suffer from self-imposed demands that everything we want must be ours right now.

Another kind of waiting does not require patience, but is a matter of opening ourselves to God, to grace and to inspiration. At any time, whenever we are in need, we can momentarily change the focus of our attention from the object of our concern to Who is present and to what is available or even inevitable to help us meet our needs. This kind of waiting depends upon trust in God's goodness and in the "conspiracy of the cosmos" to aid us rather than to thwart us. "Waiting on the Lord" does not mean being a server or waiter, or marking time until a decision is made, but rather, it means that we trust God to act in whatever way is best for us.

We can develop an appropriate attitude with regard to waiting by engaging in the conscious practice of reflection upon the consequences of momentarily pausing before acting. We will notice the confirming positive experiences of peace in our hearts, even if the circumstances are quite challenging. Through reflection, we can come to recognize how much better it is for us to wait for illumination or assistance in making decisions rather than to suffer the negative feelings that arise when we rely entirely on our own thought processes.

Waiting is sometimes the quickest way to get what we really need.