

ALL ACCESS ADVENT

Here we are, it is the last week of Advent and God is inviting us into the most intimate experience of our lives. He longs for us to believe in a Savior. He longs for us to know His love will overcome anything in its way. Today we are invited into a beautiful and wonderful exchange between the Angel Gabriel and the Blessed Mother, Mary. In the interchange, she asks, "How can this be?" He invites the angel to allow her to experience the overwhelming love God has by hearing how God will overcome the questions and doubts. So often we might struggle to believe God is longing to overcome our questions, our doubts, our roadblocks. With His desire that is eternal, He will allow us to experience something indescribable. He wants us to know He will never give up on us. He sends His only begotten Son to be our Savior. Access to this is free, easy and given in love. What we have to do is accept it, and trust it.

One of the ways the pandemic has invited me out of my comfort zone is to lead me to order running shoes online. My current pair had seen enough miles and it was time. I am not comfortable ordering shoes online. I want to try them on the old-fashioned way. There is another roadblock I always seem to encounter when I purchase new running shoes. It seems I can never find the old model that I already have. If I could just do that, I would be staying in my comfort zone. But of course, everything is discontinued. When I set out to order my new Nikes, I was pleased to discover I can personalize them. For a few dollars more, Nike allows me to pick the color of the shoes and even add some inspiration to them. You can virtually add anything. While I was not going to put flames on my shoes since I am no longer a fast runner, nor a skull and crossbones, I did think that something else could be fun. In the end, though I did not put a scripture reference such as John 3:16, I did add the date of my ordination. So I ordered them and waited.

When the shoes arrived, it turned out they had the wrong color shoelaces. It wasn't a big deal, but I called the customer service number and got a fast reply. What I heard was a little unrealistic to me. They said, send the shoes back, get a refund and start the design process over. I was in disbelief. Couldn't they just send me the correct color laces? What a waste! While I contemplated what to do, I decided to call again a day later. Maybe then I would get someone else on the line who would give me a different answer. The next day I called back and got the same answer. I asked the customer service representative what Nike does with the returned shoes. Again I was caught off guard. She told me they either destroy them, try to sell them, or donate them. I couldn't imagine someone else running around in a shoe with my initials and my ordination date! Worse yet, they would just be thrown out? All this for laces? I ended up just going to the shoe shop at the mall and buying yellow gold laces. So often our society is quick to start over and discard.

God is not that way. All-access is just that: all access. Just as He communicated to the Blessed Mother, God wants to let us know He has it covered, He has it under control. Even if we can't believe, He believes in us. Even if it seems impossible, God makes it possible. Access is everything, and God wants us to trust His plan and allow His plan to become our plan. In these final days, I know God will not discard me because I am imperfect. I know God will overwhelm me by overcoming the barriers I set up. It is who He is. This Advent has been like no other and what I have learned I have embraced; a love that is divine is like no other love. A love that is eternal is like no other love. A love that is from Him entered the world and the world never was or ever will be the same. Allow Him access and see what He does.



Father John Ouper