
Remain Mobile

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*
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"Remain mobile" were the instructions given in my new astronomy magazine. I enjoy that magazine every month, as it previews the regular rhythms of upcoming stars and as it explains unusual celestial sights.

The unusual sight it is explaining this month is next year's solar eclipse. It will be a long and glorious one, though it will not be seen here in North America. During April of 2006, the solar eclipse will begin briefly in South America, stretch across the sea, and be magnificent in Africa and parts of Eastern Europe.

Devoted followers of solar eclipses make intricate plans to be where the next eclipse will occur. They reserve rooms in remote deserts. They book berths in cruise ships if the eclipse will be seen only on the open sea (as it was last year). But they also keep finely tuned to weather forecasts.

The solar eclipse in 2006 soars across areas that are prone to overcast skies. Sometimes the eclipse chasers will not know the local conditions for their area until 24 hours before the event. Thus, they use the direction I mentioned above: "remain mobile."

How, exactly, does one "remain mobile?" The verb "remain" implies staying in one place. It means "reside." But "mobile" means the exact opposite. "Mobile" means moving, or able to move. Thus, sun chasers are directed to stay in a state of movement. They may be in the right general area, but required to move somewhere else within twenty-four hours of the actual phenomenon.

We God-watchers do well to heed the same advice. "Remain mobile." I have always liked the spiritual meanings of the word, "remain." In the New Testament it is usually translated "abide." Jesus claims that he is the true vine, and he directs us, his followers, to abide in the true vine, to remain in him. Indeed, that is consistent and solid advice.

We Christians are called to be stably moving, consistently changing, solid and yet flexible, sure and yet open. Some of us prefer one attitude to the other. There are those of us who err on the "remain" side; there are those who err on the "mobile" side.

During this Advent, four weeks before Christmas, the same advice is in order. Remain fixed in our faithfulness, steady and sure about God's presence in our hearts and in the hearts of those we love. God has surely already arrived for most of us! Abide in Jesus; be peaceful amidst the frantic affairs of the season.

But also be aware, be alert, for God's presence somewhere else. The best Advent experiences are the surprising ones, when a flash of peaceful holiness or deep delight suddenly transports us, takes us somewhere else, mobilizes us! Remain mobile this Advent. Follow the Son, as God prepares us for the sacred birth of Jesus; but be ready to find Jesus not in the royal inn, but a little ways away, in a small manger, among the lowly, mobile, moving, among his people.

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The Very Rev. Sam Candler

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