
Advent Reflection

Each week of Advent, one of our pastoral staff will kindly share a reflection. Our First Sunday of Advent reflection comes from our Pastoral Associate, Brooks Robinson MDiv, MTS

We often lump Advent in with the Christmas season. It is that time of year that we start our Christmas shopping, decorate our homes and listen to Christmas music—as the common law permits, while attending the assortment of Christmas parties with both merriment and snazzy sweaters.

Those cold, short days of December with plant life barren, just cry out for our touch of lighting, decor, and Christmas cheer. And so, Advent becomes this type of holiday liminal space, the already, not yet of eager anticipation of what appears to be here already—Christmas time.

However, if this is what Advent is reduced to we will miss out on its deeper and richer meaning. Advent is not the opening weeks of the Christmas season, *rather*, it is about the end—both the end of time and the end goal of creation. We find ourselves participating in this beguiling in-between space of the story of God’s providential care of the cosmos. Where we know that this world is not what it should be, yet we get to taste the very good this life brings.

All good stories have both a beginning and end—including God’s story Scripture reveals. Typically the reader moves from start to resolution. Yet, curiously with Advent, we begin with the end. We begin the story by reading the story backwards.

Appreciating this point opens us up to that deeper and richer meaning of Advent. Today’s gospel reading from Mark (13:33-37) displays a mature Jesus, not the babe in the manger we are used to this time of year. Here we find Jesus instructing his disciples to, “Be watchful! Be

alert!” because we “do not know when the time will come.” “The time” being an euphemism for Christ’s second coming when he will judge the living and the dead. This judgment can come at any moment—when we least expect it—so “be watchful!”

Good stories have characters. In this story, we are among the characters. We are meant to understand ourselves as the servants of the homeowner. The servants of God and disciples of Jesus. Each of us with our own tasks, our own gifts, and talents that we employ as stewards of the home. We employ these talents to further build up the Dominion of God through our right worship of God and in loving our neighbors—including our enemies (Mark 5:43-44).

This is what we pray for in the Lord’s Prayer. We pray that “thy kingdom come, thy will be done.” This is the gospel proclamation, the good news Jesus teaches his disciples. As Tertullian writes, the Lord’s Prayer “is truly the summary of the whole gospel” (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2761). Our praying then is how we measure our heart’s attunement to the will of God, to God’s Reign in our lives.

Do you *truly* pray for God’s Dominion in your life and in the world? As we move through the Advent season, spend time pondering the story backwards. Spend time pondering whether you have employed your gifts and talents for the betterment of God’s Reign, for the betterment of your neighbors, for whom you are called to love. May this Advent season bring to you a sense of anticipation and longing for God’s Kingdom.

