

# Reflections on Sunday's Readings: December 1, 2019

First Sunday of Advent [C]

Isaiah 2: 1-5

Romans 13: 11-14

Matthew 24: 37-44



## *“One-ing”*

### **Introduction**

Yesterday I was reading a reflection on Advent by a writer that I admire. His name is Fr. Dan Groody, CSC, and he is a professor at the University of Notre Dame. He is more than a professor though. He has worked along the border of the US and Mexico, and he is the director of a program at Notre Dame for the development of “Global Leadership.” He encourages young adults to consider ways to become involved with the care of the global community.

Dan shared in this reflection that after he had graduated from college, he and a buddy decided to bicycle across the United States. They began in Portland, Maine; and they journeyed together to Portland, Oregon. This trip took 75 days for them to complete.

### **Nocturnal Vision**

Dan wrote that at one point as they crossed Idaho, a very barren stretch of landscape there, they decided to ride at night because of the intense heat during the day. He discovered that sometimes the darkness was so dark that they could not see very far in front of them or behind them. At times they had only a sliver of moonlight to guide them.

Dan explained that during these nights he had to dig deeper into his faith. He had to trust more that all was well, and God was with them. Dan said he found himself developing a “nocturnal

vision.” This was a deeper, more profound sense of faith and guidance in this circumstance of darkness.

### Similar to Advent

Dan went on to say that **Advent** is a time and space to cultivate this “nocturnal vision,” this deeper vision of faith and hope as we journey through the darkness of the world, of our politics, of our Church, and of our personal lives.

For this to happen we need a different rhythm than our usual lifestyle. We need a quieter, slower, and less hurried path or pilgrimage to God and to know God’s heart and presence in our lives. This is what Advent is for ... a quieter, slower time to **experience** what we believe in. We’re invited in this season to go deeper through the words we use about God to **meet** God ourselves. Thus, our faith, hope, and love grow stronger inside of us.

### Journey for each of us

This is a journey for each of us and for every generation: to allow God to draw close to us through Christ that we might be transformed and know our true, real selves in God’s real presence to us.

As this happens we drop our defenses, our “arms,” our disguises, and our games. We grow more hopeful and peaceful, more open to **God’s dreams** for us personally and for the world rather than holding on to our defenses and our weapons to protect ourselves.

### The peacefulness of God

We become more open to believe in and try out the peaceful ways of God. This is where we have come from: the peaceful, gracious, love-flowing heart of the Trinity. This is what God wants us to know and experience. All that we see on the news at night is really “illusion.” It is real in the sense that it can hurt others, but it is not the real, deep truth of our lives. True peacefulness is what we come from and where we are going. As we make this journey into God’s presence and know God’s peacefulness, we come **home** to our deepest selves. This leads us to welcome others into the **common home** we share in the heart of God.

This is what the Jewish community means when they say we are called to know the “**shalom of God**,” the peacefulness of God. It is more than just “peace.” This “shalom” is the experience of being one with God, one with ourselves, one with others around us, and one with all of creation. This truly is the work of God in us and among us.

One of the mystics in our tradition, Blessed Julian of Norwich, calls this work of God “**one-ing.**” God is ever “one-ing” us to himself, wedding us to God’s own self. God is also “one-ing” us to our own true selves, wedding us to love and care about ourselves. God is also “one-ing” us with those around us, wedding us in a deep communion with our sisters and brothers. And God is ever “one-ing” us with all of creation, wedding us into the fabric of our brotherhood and sisterhood with all creatures and all of the cosmos. This **communion** is at the heart of God and is what God wants us **to share in now and always.**

## God's Christmas Gift to Us

Advent is our time to let his "one-ing" happen, to choose to let this "one-ing" happen on all these layers of our lives. This is the Christmas gift that God wants to give to each of us, and all of us together. But we are challenged to make room and time for **this gift** to be given and to be received.

As we let this gift happen to us, as we receive God's love into our lives, we become **light** for the world. That's why I am wearing this beautiful new vestment today, given to me by my sister, Phyllis. It is full of candles and candlelight as you can see. We are each and all together being called to be **light for our world**.

This weekend I also found a beautiful quote about St. Francis of Assisi who so welcomed and received this "one-ing" of God that he brought a vibrant light to our world. Let me read this passage to you.

"At that time, through the presence of St. Francis and through his reputation, it surely seemed a new light had been sent from heaven to earth, driving away all the darkness that had so nearly covered the whole region that hardly anyone knew where to turn. Deep forgetfulness of God and lazy neglect of the commandments overwhelmed almost everyone, so that they could barely be roused from old, deep-seated evils. He gleamed like a shining *star in darkness of night* and *like the morning spread over the darkness*. Thus, in a short time, the appearance of the entire region was changed. ... *Thanksgiving and the voice of praise* resounded everywhere, as many, casting aside earthly concerns, gained knowledge of themselves in the life and teaching of the most blessed father Francis and aspired to love and offer reverence for their Creator."

Thomas of Celano, [The Life of St. Francis](#)

We are all called to be such lights for our world. Let us pray for one another during this Advent season that we might each welcome and receive the love and light of Christ and shine with these gifts for our world today.

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