

# CONNECT! SUNDAY REFLECTION

33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time | For Sunday, November 18th, 2018

## Remain Vigilant for the Coming of Christ

Written by Angie Windnagle

Daniel 12:1-3

Hebrews 10:11-14, 18

Mark 13:24-32



Last month, my son was studying arachnids and found himself the proud pet keeper of a spiny orb weaver spider he named Thorny. The spider even had a small container with twigs, leaves, and a fly or two hand-caught by my son. After learning of the species' mild countenance, he let Thorny crawl in his hands and up his arm each day, creating a unique bond. One morning, he was elated to discover that Thorny had laid eggs! However, the excitement soon shifted after reading that orb weavers die shortly after laying eggs. Thus began the watchful waiting each day to see when she would pass. He had become so enamored by the little critter that he would carry her little container around with him everywhere to ensure he could say goodbye and be there when she died. He was the guardian of the spider and never out of her sight.

The readings this weekend at Mass remind me of this eager watchfulness. This time of year, the readings become a blend of hopeful ominosity as we prepare for the feast of Christ the King. We listen to words of destruction, turmoil, and suffering. Yet, we also hear words of triumphant conquering, of a kingdom to come not of this world. We are reminded of our fleeting time here and the reality of a moment in time when Christ will come again. We are reminded (like my son) that the hour can come at any moment, and if we aren't prepared, we can be caught off guard.

When I look around the news today, I think it's easy to feel that sense of an end time coming slowly to fruition. In the first reading, Daniel reveals the coming of Christ being a "time unsurpassed in distress." It's hard not to hear of more mass shootings, clergy scandals, and political corruption in the news each month and wonder if we are tasting some of that distress. The second reading echoes this feel in a different way, creating a sort of unrest when we hear of priests offering sacrifices daily without fruit, perhaps reminding us of the works of those who have been part of the scandal. There's no doubt the words of Scripture this Sunday seem to harken to our own times.

But if we leave things there, it is too easy to create a sort of pessimistic worldview, making us vigilant for the wrong things. There will always be suffering and turmoil while we are on this earth. Corruption, scandals, and real physical suffering have been around since the beginning of time and will be around until the end. My son was distraught when Thorny died, but after her death, he realized he still had the hope of the little egg sac waiting there. He was alert and vigilant, and because of his great care for the little spider, she was healthy enough to lay her eggs and offer him that gift. I think we can look to the readings and the end times and see that same hope.

Throughout all the readings, the call is to remain vigilant, not for the bad stuff that will happen but for the coming of Christ who is Love. We aren't being told that we need to be alert and anxious solely because everything will be so terrible. Rather, we need to be alert and pure of heart so when that time comes, we will be like those we hear of in Daniel who will "shine brightly like the splendor of the firmament ... and shall be like the stars forever." Our vigilance needs to be a vigilance of heart, remaining intently fixed on Christ and casting off sin at every chance. The Psalmist echoes this saying, "You are my inheritance, O Lord!" It is about Him, and it always has been. Through the worst of what the world can become, we have the hope and the invitation to remain steadfast and cling to our High Priest who does not defile but rather heals and gives life.

In the Gospel, Jesus tells us to take a lesson from the fig tree and "know that he is near" when we see the signs. In some way, the signs are already before us. Each day, then, we have a choice to live aware or unaware. We can become part of the darkness around us and be consumed by it, or remain alert with a heart so focused on Christ that any counterfeit can be immediately spotted. This happens through the small moments of our daily life. So how will we choose to live?

For me, this means being less catty on social media, knowing that Christ is in everyone I meet, whether on the street or in my newsfeed. It means finding time to pray and praise each day, even if it's done while filling the dishwasher, so my heart is attuned to God and ready to hear His voice whenever He calls. It also means letting go of fear of how the world is today.

Suffering, human failures and weakness, politicians, and even unfaithful priests are not who we are hopefully waiting for. We await the bridegroom, Christ, and a new heaven and earth, where God's "words will not pass away." Let us keep our hearts fixed on Christ, ready for whenever He calls, in the big moments of our lives, but most especially in the small hidden moments.

*Angie Windnagle*

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## PRAYER

Let nothing disturb you,  
Let nothing frighten you,  
All things are passing;  
God only is changeless.  
Patience gains all things.  
Who has God wants nothing.  
God alone suffices.

—[St. Teresa's Bookmark](#)