

# SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29

## DO YOU SEE THE NIGHT WATCH IN THE TOWER?

*Did you notice the evening watchman? While perhaps we do not all maintain formal roles as gatekeepers, certainly we can all relate to the experience of 'watchful waiting' that Jesus describes in today's gospel reading. That is, a time anxiously anticipated, but one where we are unsure of its specifics.*

A woman in her final weeks of pregnancy: attentive to every twinge of pain she experiences; she does not know when her time to labor will make itself known. At every turn, cognizant that the life growing within her can make their appearance at any hour, she wonders, "Could this be it, the moment when our lives change forever for the better?" While a vastly different end is contemplated by the adult child accompanying a parent into death, similar questions bore into us as we await their final breaths, "Is this the beginning of the end?" More complicated still, is the 'watchful waiting' carried out by the cancer patient and their care provider: more tests; more scans, "Let's wait and see how this develops." Meanwhile, the patient oscillates between hope and despair, wondering what their prognosis might mean for their future. Finally, and perhaps most poignant, is the communal experience of 'watchful waiting' shared by the world as we seek cures, treatments and vaccines to fight COVID-19. For health workers, the waiting is especially tedious: when will we expect surges of infections? Are we adequately prepared? Will I inevitably fall ill? As we suffer through the infections of ourselves, loved ones, patients and residents, we experience all too deeply what it means to be watchful and alert.



Indeed, both in times of joy and times of suffering, 'watchful waiting' can take on a life of its own. In these first days of Advent, as Christmas songs begin to take over radio stations and stores are inundated with décor, as we relish in the opportunity to gather together in thanksgiving and praise, we know also that this Christmas season will look like none we've experienced before. Our gatherings will, perhaps, be more intimate and less extravagant. Many of us will be feeling acutely the loss of loved ones as we gather around our holiday tables or the inability to gather with those whom we typically spend the holidays. Because of this, it is more important than ever to prepare our hearts, to be watchful and alert and to make room for the humble arrival of Christ the Savior.

What does that preparation look like for you and your family in this season? How are you watchfully waiting on the Lord?

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