



ST. MATTHEW — PARISH —

Advent 2020 Week 1

► 1st Sunday of Advent GOSPEL:
Mark 13:33–37
Be watchful! Be alert!

Jesus said **to his disciples**:

“Be watchful! Be alert!

You do not know when the time will come.

It is like a man traveling abroad.

He leaves home

and places his servants **in charge**,

each with his **own work**,

and orders the gatekeeper

to be on the watch.

Watch, therefore; you do not know

when the lord of the house is coming,

whether in the **evening**, or at **midnight**,

or at **cockcrow**, or in the **morning**.

May he not come suddenly

and find you sleeping.

What I say to you, I say to all: **‘Watch!’**”

► 1st Sunday of Advent REFLECTION:

Up until this Advent, this Gospel has made me nervous. My ear hears the Lord say, "I've given you a work to do. I'll leave you alone to do it but I'm watching you. I want to see results. Don't fall asleep. Don't relax. Don't blow it." My takeaway was pressure, anxiety. I missed a small part at the beginning that makes a big difference.

JESUS SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES... Our Lord addresses His parable to all His disciples, together. The responsibility is real but we are not alone. The Lord is never far away and we have each other. This Advent, for the first time, I'm hearing this parable for **us**, not just for me alone. And I'm finding that changes everything. This Gospel is changing the way I look at responsibility.

He puts his servants in charge... How these words crackle with energy! The Lord trusts us. The Lord hands us a steaming mug of freedom. Here, you're in charge. With the first sip, we realize **Wow, I can taste a TON of responsibility in this freedom.**

This is where we need to see responsibility as something that happens in love. **Responsibility is the appropriate effect of being loved.** Somebody loves us. We take that love in and it changes us. I don't want to see myself act like I haven't been loved.

We discover that love turns into responsibility by way of empathy. As soon as I empathize with the one who loves me, I want to **live up to** the love I receive. And suddenly I'm not nervous that the Lord is watching. I'm **glad** the Lord sees me trying to live up to His love.

Each with his own work... Our Lord cares what we do. He assigns each of us a role in His unfolding Kingdom. He also asks us what we'd like to do for heaven. Many of us have long conversations about it: **God, is this what you want me to do?** The ordinary way God leads us to His will is by shaping our desires. There's some good that we find ourselves wanting to do, and we ask, "God is this it?" The Lord values our work. Whatever good we do, no matter how imperfectly we do it, pleases the Lord. Sure, there's a trash can. The lid of the trash can says **Thou shalt not.** Our Lord sends us to do all the good we want, as best we can; and He advises us, "Just stay out of the trash."

Evening, midnight, cockcrow, morning. Our Lord describes discipleship as a kind of guard duty. He commands us to keep watching through the evening, past midnight, past rooster crow, all the way to morning.

So what time is "rooster crow"? That's another thing I got wrong about this Gospel. I've known roosters my whole life, but up until this morning I always thought roosters crowed **at random.** Sometimes a rooster will crow over and over from midnight to dawn. I thought it meant nothing but, "Hey everybody! I'm a rooster." I can't imagine anything more nerve-wracking than trying to use a rooster for a clock: waiting, listening for the crow that means I should do something important.

I was wrong. Roosters do not crow at random. At night, a rooster is on guard duty. When it hears any strange sound, it shouts out, "Hey! I'm here and I've got this. This is my home, my family. So if that's a predator I hear, bring it on."

The rooster is on guard for dangers, but the guard duty of a disciple is something else entirely. Our Lord says, **Watch for me!** We are watching for the Lord Jesus; and we never have to be afraid of Him. So picture yourself on guard duty **right where you are**, right there in the life God has given you. We see the people God has placed in our lives. We see everything we're involved in. This is where we watch for the Lord.

From where we stand on watch, we can see each other. We check in with each other. Are you seeing the Lord where you are? How is He coming in? Far from adding pressure and stress to busy lives, keeping watch **together** is peace. We naturally start recognizing the Lord in each other. Perhaps that's why the Lord commands and even pleads, **Watch for me!** When we look for the Lord, we notice each other at a whole new depth.

So this reflection ends with people enjoying each other as they watch together for the Lord. In our **Catechesis** video for the 1st week of Advent, we will look at the **ultimate** communion of Persons, the **Holy Trinity.** Until then...this is me, watching the Lord watch you.

► 1st Sunday of Advent CATECHESIS:

The most central mystery of our faith is the **Trinity**.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls the Trinity “**the mystery that sheds light on all other mysteries**” (CCC #234). In other words, a little insight into the Trinity can help us with...anything.

Let's go!

We look into the mystery of God.

God is ONE. God is SIMPLE.

God is NOT made of parts. Anything that's put together from parts can be taken apart.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit are not parts of God. They are three Persons in the One God. There is One God. God is One.

We look into the mystery of the One God. We see a Person who is First. The First Person pours out His love. His love looks back at Him and says, “Hello, **Father**. I'm your **Son**.”

The Father is loving His Son, and His Son is loving Him back. The love between the Father and the Son IS the Holy Spirit.

Not “makes,” not “leads to” or “causes.”

IS.

The Holy Spirit IS the love between God the Father and God the Son.

The Father **is loving** the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit **is loving** the Father.

The Son **is loving** the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit **is loving** the Son.

Each Person loves the other Persons.

“Other” is important. Love is person to person. **Without distinct persons, there cannot be any love.**

My dad, God rest him, loved my mom. Dad thought a lot about mom being another person. He thought about it while looking for the car keys. Mom is this whole other person who puts the car keys somewhere else, not on the key rack. In searching for the car keys, dad was looking into the mystery of his beloved wife.

The Father **is not** the Son.

The Son **is not** the Father.

The Son **is not** the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit **is not** the Son.

The Holy Spirit **is not** the Father.

The Father **is not** the Holy Spirit.

The “**IS NOT**” and the “**IS LOVING**” come together: we can't have one without the other. The more we affirm the **distinction**, the otherness of the Persons of the Trinity, the more we affirm Their **love**.

And all this love is happening in the One God.

God is love.

So there we have it: a crash introduction to the main mystery of our faith, the Holy Trinity.

It's OK if not much of this makes sense. For most of us, our reaction to the Trinity starts with “I don't get it” and only in God's own good time does “I don't get it” become “Whoa! There's too much, I can't get it all!”

► 1st **MONDAY** of Advent **DISCUSSION**:

On **Monday, November 30th at 7:00pm**,
Fr. Kevin McCabe will be on Facebook
Live hosting our **DISCUSSION** for the 1st Week of Advent.

WATCH!

- The Lord is coming. Do you have a sense of keeping watch for Him **together**?
With whom—do you get to **check in** with each other?
- Do you see the Lord over where you are? How is He getting in?

IN CHARGE, OWN WORK

- How much **responsibility** do you taste in the mug of **freedom** God has given you?
- Is it a taste you like?
- Responsibility is the appropriate effect of being loved.**

THROUGH THE NIGHT

- A rooster watches out for threats. We are on watch for a friend, a Savior, a baby who is God the Son.
Do you ever catch yourself feeling **afraid of Jesus**?
- How might that fear effect us?
- What's the **alternative**?

The HOLY TRINITY

- How 'bout that inner life of God?
- The Trinity is the ultimate communion of Persons. The Three Persons are **totally attentive** to each other.
What would that be like for us...for all of us to be on watch for the Lord **TOGETHER** in a **TOTALLY ATTENTIVE** way?