

(PRACTICING) CATHOLIC

December 1, 2024

(PRACTICING) CATHOLIC - RECOGNIZE GOD IN YOUR ORDINARY MOMENTS

Remembering Advent

It always makes me laugh a little, these apocalyptic Gospel readings that come at the beginning of Advent.

What a funny juxtaposition — all of us stringing twinkle lights and wrapping presents, with Jesus thundering on about the end of the world. It's Christmas! Don't be a downer. Pour me some more eggnog and turn up the Nat King Cole.

Well, except it's not Christmas. It's Advent.

There's nothing wrong with the cultural accessories that have developed alongside this religious holiday. There's nothing wrong with the twinkle lights and the eggnog. But here's the thing: when Satan knows we're watching the front gate, he slips in the back door. And something I've found is that one back door he likes to use in my life is Cultural Christmas.

I love Cultural Christmas. I tend to overdo Cultural Christmas. I overschedule, I overdecorate, I overgift. All this "over" leads to — you guessed it! — overwhelm. "The anxieties of daily life," as Jesus describes in today's Gospel, make my heart drowsy. My *spiritual* Christmas joy, time and time again, is diminished — all because I embrace Cultural Christmas and ignore Advent. Satan sneaks in with the twinkle lights and the Christmas carols and he snatches The Present like the nasty little Grinch he is. He photobombs my experience of the religious holidays with the anxieties I so willingly embrace because of the production that is Cultural Christmas.

So, remember to rest this Advent, folks. Rest your heart. Rest your hands. Watch the back door *and* the front. Remember that this is the perfect time to be thinking about the state of your soul and not just the state of your house.

(Even though, yes, I know, the guests are coming any minute.)