



Reflection for November 29, 2015 First Sunday of Advent

By Sister Mary Joan Coultas, CDP

As I begin to ponder the readings for the first Sunday, my mind and heart are full of sadness due to the recent happenings in Paris—the senseless killing and injuring of so many people just out to enjoy an evening of soccer or a dinner with friends. I have been to Paris and remember that our hotel was quite near the area where those having dinner were attacked. My memories of very hospitable people, great Impressionist artworks and a wonderful boat ride on the Seine River on a bright sunny day, made the Paris attacks even more surreal. I will always think of Paris as the City of Light, certainly not as a place of chaos and darkness.

Then, as I read the scripture for the first Sunday of Advent, it was as if our Provident God was stepping into the current reality in a very powerful and descriptive way. In the Gospel, we find Jesus speaking to his disciples about signs of disaster, both in nature and in the lives of individuals and nations. At the end of each liturgical year, and the beginning of Advent, we are confronted with these “end times” readings, often over-interpreted insofar as the world is coming to an end. Actually, God seems to be calling us, rather, to a new level of conversion and action in the call to be vigilant. Perhaps this vigilance during Advent is created to spend a bit more time in reflection and prayer than we do in shopping and pre-Christmas insanity. Possibly, given the world situation, as creating fear and mistrust of all foreigners and immigrants, we are called to reach out to persons who need our help. We are also called to enrich life with pre-Christmas anticipation and joy.

It seems appropriate then to turn to the writings of Pope Francis. At the conclusion of *The Joy of the Gospel*, the Pope writes the following reflection:

*Star of the new evangelization,
help us to bear radiant witness to communion,
service, ardent and generous faith,
justice and love of the poor
that the joy of the Gospel
may reach to the ends of the earth,
illuminating even the fringes of our world.*

God knows that our world needs illumination; then perhaps Paris will continue to be the City of Light.