



Advent Daily Reflections
December 12, 2024

Listen to the Advent Podcast [here](#), and through [Spotify](#) or [Apple](#).

Today's reading is from Thomas Merton:

"What is serious to men is often very trivial in the sight of God. What in God might appear to us as "play" is perhaps what he Himself takes most seriously. At any rate, the Lord plays and diverts Himself in the garden of His creation, and if we could let go of our own obsession with what we think is the meaning of it all, we might be able to hear His call and follow Him in His mysterious, cosmic dance. We do not have to go very far to catch echoes of that game, and of that dancing. When we are alone on a starlit night; when by chance we see the migrating birds in autumn descending on a grove of junipers to rest and eat; when we see children in a moment when they are really children; when we know love in our own hearts; or when, like the Japanese poet Bashō we hear an old frog land in a quiet pond with a solitary splash--at such times the awakening, the turning inside out of all values, the "newness," the emptiness and the purity of vision that make themselves evident, provide a glimpse of the cosmic dance.

For the world and time are the dance of the Lord in emptiness. The silence of the spheres is the music of a wedding feast. The more we persist in misunderstanding the phenomena of life, the more we analyze them out into strange finalities and complex purposes of our own, the more we involve ourselves in sadness, absurdity and despair. But it does not matter much, because no despair of ours can alter the reality of things; or stain the joy of the cosmic dance which is always there. Indeed, we are in the midst of it, and it is in the midst of us, for it beats in our very blood, whether we want it to or not.

Yet the fact remains that we are invited to forget ourselves on purpose, cast our awful solemnity to the winds and join in the general dance."

Today's Reflection is by Laura Tyszka:

This text from Thomas Merton is an interesting take on the moments that make up a life. He is saying that whether we join in or not there is a cosmic dance of God going on, and it is our job to notice and join in. He says we are far too concerned with the serious aspects of life instead of "play" and therefore involve ourselves in sadness, absurdity and despair. It can seem a little harsh because I spend much time and energy worrying about the state of the country and the world, my kids, the environment, politics, protecting the vulnerable, etc. I could keep going, especially since the election, which has shone a spotlight on this. When we think of the arc of the moral universe bending toward justice, I often just don't see it. I know it's a long arc but it's hard to not grow weary.

In this passage, he says, “if we could let go of our own obsession with what we think is the meaning of it all, we might be able to hear His call and follow Him in His mysterious cosmic dance.” Letting go of what we think the meaning of it all is? Huh, like maybe I don’t actually know the meaning at least not now. Things seem so broken, that unkindness and the mean guys are winning, and the unfairness of that is hard to accept. Merton is saying that it is not up to me to know the meaning and I’m taking too much time and energy trying to figure it out. Instead he says it’s more important to join the dance that’s already happening. That can seem trivial when the world looks like it’s falling apart.

So what does joining in the dance look like? To Merton, it’s several things. A starlit night, children playing, love in our hearts and a frog landing in a pond. These will be different for everyone. Here are some things that come to mind for me lately. Playing a game with my 8 year old who laughs with delight when he beats me yet again in Connect 4, getting together each week in Advent to craft together and work on our embroidery projects, watching and appreciating the characters in the show Somebody Somewhere, seeing the movie Piece by Piece with my other kid who loves music and animation. The other night my son Gus insisted that I had to go out and see how bright the moon was. I think noticing these things are like that, when you are open, you will notice. According to Merton these glimpses of God, or the Divine, are happening all around us but we need to take the time to notice. To stop worrying long enough to see. I want to do that more, especially this Advent.



Laura Tyszka lives very close to the church with her husband Ben and 3 boys, Leo, Jesse and Gus. She is an artist and craftsperson with a small business called Wren Handmade.