

Wake Up and Pay Attention

RECENTLY I stumbled across a television program set in Northern Ireland—a mystery program called “Single-Handed.” I’m a sucker for mysteries. But I was less captivated by the story line than I was by the landscape Detective Jack Driscoll drove through every day to do his sleuthing: a landscape of winding roads through barren hills, dramatic skies filled with dark clouds that opened up to sudden flashes of sunlight, and ocean waves that crashed along the shore as birds hovered overhead looking for elusive fish. I was mesmerized.

Why, I asked myself, was I so struck by this scene—particularly by the sky? I think it was because that sky was so spacious, such an incredibly large and dynamic canopy over what seemed to be a closed-in and introspective world.

Jack and the residents of this beautiful and terrible landscape seemed not to notice the sky. Instead their eyes were trained on the road of life in front of them. Jack never brought his car to a

screaming halt to stare in wonder at the sky or even to really see the people inhabiting his world: the distressed woman hanging her laundry out despite the cold and biting wind, the man trying to find his footing as he herds his sheep on a rocky slope, the children running into the old school at the sound of the bell, or the man arguing with his wife by the front door. He and the other residents were focused, as am I most of the time, on the immediate concerns of life—making a living, sustaining relationships, fulfilling obligations.

But I am in the midst of Advent, that season in the church year that calls me to a larger perspective. The readings and the ritual say to me, “Wake up! Pay attention! See, God is doing a new thing, even now, even today, hidden in the midst of everyday life. Do you see it?”

It is almost the winter solstice, and darkness comes early to my part of the world. Sunlight and clouds are hidden from view, but I am reminded that wonderful things also grow in the dark: seeds and babies, compassion and reconcilia-

tion, healing and hope, challenge and fortitude. And if I’m aware of this, my heart becomes larger, more open, like the sky, knowing that I am encompassed by and part of a dynamic and powerful love that enfolds the world.

I’m abiding in the hope of Advent even though I am deeply affected by the strife in the world and the brokenness of the human family. I’m painfully aware that all of creation waits for redemption. But Advent reminds me of the expanse of mercy in which we live, a saving grace that is here among us and for which we wait with joyful longing. Do you see it? ■



Joyce Kane is editorial assistant for *The Banner*.

“[Our story] is a chronicle of yearning for the inbreaking of God’s living face into . . . personal history and into the history of . . . imperfect times. It is the eschatological yearning, echoing the prophet Isaiah’s cry, ‘O that you would tear open the heavens and come down.’”

— JONATHAN MONTALDO

