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by Pat Marrin

[View Author Profile](#)

[patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.](mailto:patrickjmarrin@gmail.com)

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“Be prepared for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come” (Luke 12:39).

Among Pope Francis’ favorite words are “encounter” and “dialogue,” and we can add “surprise” to these. Truth is not an idea but a relationship, and as we seek God we are on a learning curve toward greater intimacy, which is dynamic and filled with surprises.

Today’s Gospel records Jesus’ frequent reminder to remain alert and prepared for the coming of God into our lives. It can happen at any time and in any circumstance, and often it occurs when we least expect it. Be like servants awaiting your master’s return. Stay awake. Even if the master is delayed, be prepared and don’t lose faith.

Abraham received the promise of a homeland when he was called to leave his native place. He was also promised progeny. Both promises were slow in coming. His sojourn in a new land was long and uncertain, and the son he and Sarah were promised did not arrive until they were well past child-bearing years. She was sterile and Abraham was “as good as dead” when Isaac was born and the long trajectory of the patriarchs pointed into the distant future to the coming messiah.

Luke applied Jesus’ promise of the coming of the Son of Man to his first-century community’s expectation of the Second Coming, the return of the risen Christ. We can hear his description of household servants keeping vigil for the return of their master from a wedding. Leaders who grew weary while waiting for the *Parousia* and

began to take advantage of their churches, abusing their authority and the faithful entrusted to them, were warned that Jesus would come like a thief in the night or in the final watches and would hold them accountable.

Deeply held promises can define our lives. St. Anselm wrote that the future we long for is like a memory placed in us from birth. Adults learn never to promise a child something if they don't intend to do so, for children are deeply imprinted by anticipation and remember promises by those they trust and believe in.

Even as adults, there are promises we cling to. Whatever trials or delays we encounter in life, we believe in the dream of wholeness and love we carry in our hearts. God keeps promises, and we anticipate meeting and knowing God face to face because the Source from which we came is also our Destination.

God comes often to those who learn to recognize the divine knock at the door. A wonderful children's book, *Whobody There?*, tells of two children who know their grandparents are coming, and they distinguish their special arrival from the casual appearance of anybody, nobody, even somebody. Their beloved grandparents are *Whobodies*.

God is the ultimate *Whobody* who created us, named us and indwells us. Jesus wants us to be alert to this ever-present Mystery. Our natural longing for God is only an echo of God's everlasting longing for us.

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