

My Dear St. Francis of Assisi Family,

In that haunting Gospel passage from St. Mark, Jesus speaks to us about the darkening of the sun, the dimming of the moon, and stars falling from heaven. These cosmic images can feel remote and apocalyptic. But perhaps Jesus is speaking about something more intimate - the times in our own lives when everything we counted on seems to crumble away, when our own personal universe goes dark.

We all experience such moments: the devastating diagnosis, the broken relationship, the loss of work, the death of someone irreplaceable. In these times, it can feel like the very foundations are shaking beneath our feet. Yet Jesus tells us that precisely in these moments of seeming collapse, "the Son of Man will come."

This is the paradox of our faith - that God draws nearest when we feel most abandoned. When everything secure and predictable falls away, we are stripped down to our essential vulnerability. And it is there, in that naked place of not knowing, that we can finally recognize Christ's presence.

Perhaps this week, we can ask ourselves:

1. What are the "stars" in your life - the fixed points of light you rely on for security and direction? How might letting them "fall" open up space for a deeper encounter with Mystery?
2. Notice how Jesus says that "no one knows the day or hour" - not even himself. What might it mean to live faithfully in this radical unknowing, to trust in God's presence precisely when we cannot see or predict the future?

There is something strangely comforting in Jesus' words if we listen with the heart. He's telling us that even when our world seems to be ending, it is really only beginning. The darkness that frightens us may be the prelude to a new dawn we cannot yet imagine.

Blessings,
Fr. Vincent