

You do not know the day or the hour..

The walls of Jerusalem rose like cliffs from the dark Kidron Valley. Across on the slopes, at their camp near the top of the Mount of Olives, Jesus and the disciples sat watching the shadows of evening slowly climb the fortress walls.

Below them, on the hillside, the Garden of Gethsemane had been swallowed into the quicksand of darkness. Only the weak light from one small campfire gave a faint tracing to the entrance of the garden's grotto.

Andrew sighed and leaned back against the trunk of one of the trees. "Looks like they're closing the gate over there," he said.

"Yes, I saw guards posted." Philip noted.

Jesus looked over at the two disciples, leaning on his right elbow: "Just as they will be on watch tonight, so must you Andrew and you Philip. Stay awake! You do not know when the appointed time will come."

Misunderstanding Jesus, Andrew asked, "Tonight? Should I stay awake all night?"

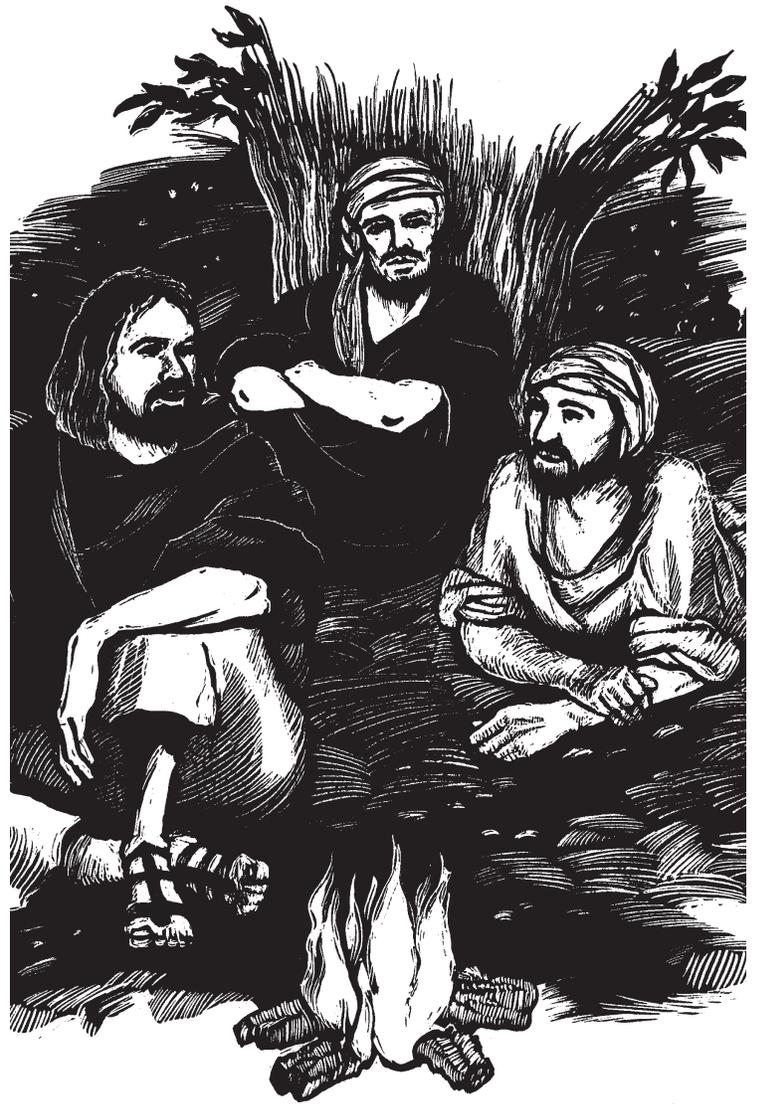
Jesus explained he was talking about a greater image, the coming of the Son of Man. The other disciples moved closer.

"It is like a man traveling abroad," Jesus began. "He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he orders the man at the gate to watch with a sharp eye. Look around you! You do not know when the master of the house is coming, whether at dusk, at midnight, when the cock crows, or at early dawn."

"With so many thieves on the road at night," Andrew said, still missing the point, "the master would not likely travel at night. If he did, the guards would be caught by surprise."

Jesus smiled patiently and looked around at the others faces, then back to Andrew. "That's an excellent point, Andrew," Jesus said, adding: "Do not let him come suddenly and catch you asleep."

No one said anything for a moment. They turned



their attention back to the torches moving along the top of the walls of Jerusalem.

Jesus concluded: "What I say to you, I say to all: Be on guard!"



Our lives are lived on the edge. We are balanced between life and death. Anything could happen at any moment. Nothing could be truer than Jesus' words: "You do not know when the appointed time will come." We are left with this Gospel warning to be ready for the end of the world, remembering also the message of last week's Gospel: to love and care for one another is to love and care for Jesus.