

*In the beginning was the Word . . .
And the Word became flesh . . .
And pitched a tent among us . . .*

Here. In the midst of the perishing embers of the year 2020 – accosted by a venomous virus hunting and haunting an overwhelmed planet.

Here. Ensnared in our jaded society – exhausted and disheartened by a public discourse utterly devoid of civility, bankrupted by a vacuum of common civic endeavor.

Here. Amid our frightened and fraying culture – harboring suspicions and resentments of every sort and scale – race, class, law enforcement, wealth, healthcare, belonging.

Here. In our beleaguered city – downcast, disoriented, disillusioned, divided, depressed.

Longing for release, awaiting deliverance, hoping for reprieve.

Such is the aching human longing, waiting and hoping that streams into the consciousness of disciples of Jesus – the long-awaited One – who now greet Christmas.

Surmounting the 2020 Advent of dread, expectation and hope. Isaiah’s season. Hard labor. Carving a highway through rugged, desolate terrain. Welcoming the One who would set us free from every ancient burden, every present scourge – we now greet . . .

An infant.

Really?

A tent?

Hadn’t Isaiah promised so much more? Something sturdy to repel dread and fatigue?

And yet . . . *Here.*

A baby . . .

vulnerable and frail . . .

dependent and devoid of speech . . .

hungry and thirsty . . .

threatened by birth into a family on the run . . .

sheltered in a tent . . .

swaddled in tatters . . .

Here. A baby . . . thrust into our arms. Entrusted to our care. Exacting our deepest nurture.

Such is the fragile presence of our G-D among us.

This *Feast of the Nativity* propelled the imagination of Francis of Assisi. He reveled in all the fleshly images of the Christmas story – [oxen and ass, manger and Magi, shepherds and straw](#). Meditation on the *Nativity* provoked in Francis a life-long fascination and reverence for the humility of the mystery of G-D made manifest in the choice of the *Most High* to *become flesh* – divinity endlessly wedded to the lowly, the vulnerable, the forgotten, the despised, the spurned and shunned.

Such is the *fragile presence of our G-D among us* – a presence Francis faithfully tended in the margins of his time and among those who had been rendered invisible and mute by the structures of his day.

May these festival days of Christmas provoke in us renewed awe at the *fragile presence of G-D in our midst*. A baby thrust into our arms demanding the deepest care, compassion, tenderness and nurture of which we are capable – gifts of divine origin destined to become flesh in us, through us and with us.

Here. We are left holding the baby.

What then will this child turn out to be?

Merry Christmas.

Here.