



A Reflection on the Fourth Week of Advent

Advent is an annual journey, a spiritual passage in the winter months from deep darkness, absence and despair to the very presence and incarnation of the Holy One here with us in the Birth of Christ. We move from darkness, to the glorious light of the dawning of salvation, remembering the promise Jesus made to us: “I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

Consider this story. The little boy was only four the first night that he stayed over at his grandmother’s house. When bedtime came and his grandmother turned off the light and closed the bedroom door, he quickly slipped out of bed and ran out of the dark room. They repeated the process a few times before the grandmother quietly offered, “Would you like to learn to see in the dark?” Of course, he did. So she directed him to shut his eyes tight and count to 40. She promised that when he opened his eyes, he would be able to see. He wasn’t sure he could believe her, and he could barely count to 40, but he tried it and it worked. His patient and loving grandmother had prepared him to face the dark and deal with it.

Likewise, the ancient music of the Psalms glorifies God who comforts us and gives us courage to accept the darkness and to welcome the light.

If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea,
even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me.
Surely the darkness will cover me, and light around me turn to night.
Darkness is not dark to you, O Lord. The night is as bright as the day;
darkness and light to you are both alike.

The experience of being health care givers can bring us to the edges of darkness – both our own and that of others. In those dark places where there is suffering and sadness, we might feel the desire to run away. We call out: *Be our light in the darkness, O Lord.*



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There are many in our communities who cry out for comfort. Rarely does someone come through our doors because everything is going well. How might we be the light, ever so faint, to help another person to be a little less afraid? Through our work we are a light that shines in the darkness.

In these final days of Advent, as the days get shorter and the darkness of night appears to overwhelm the light of day, let us sit, let us wait, and let us welcome the darkness. It is as though we are waking up from a deep sleep, and we are flooded with the absolutely loving light of the Lord, our God. The Gospel of John assures us: *A light shines in the darkness, and the darkness shall not overcome it.*

May your Advent journey lead you to a renewed and joyful experience of the birth of Christ our Savior. A blessed Christmas to you.

The author of this reflection is Dave Ebenhoh. Visit his website at www.stillwaterspeaks.com.

The Catholic Health Association would like to thank Jon Sarta for allowing us to use his music from the albums Catholic Piano Music Vol 8 - Advent and Catholic Piano Music Vol 4 - Christmas for the podcast. His Music can be obtained from mljmusic.com.