

### HOPE FOR THE HOPELESS

This series of Advent reflections contemplates the journey of life at different stages. In week one we reflected on reaching life's end. This week, we direct our thoughts to what it means to be aging, poor and homeless.

We have come to that time of year when the daylight hours have grown short and the wind brings freezing cold. How can one who has a home, a family, a job, clean clothing and enough food to eat begin to imagine what it means to be homeless?

The Advent journey tests our spiritual capacity to identify with the depths of human experience. When Jesus came into the world, the tiny, fragile child of Mary, without the comforts of home, God became one of us. Each of us has the capacity to identify with those on the margins.

Some of us have been there—or very close to it. Some who are homeless have run away from threatening situations and have failed to find security and shelter elsewhere. Some suffer from mental health issues that separate them from what most people perceive as ordinary life. In other cases, through deprivation, job loss and economic reversals, people end up with nothing to show for their lives but their aging bodies and a few portable possessions.

Advent calls us to bring hope to the hopeless, to be messengers of hope and to open our arms to those in need. The words of Psalm 72 remind us of God's mercy:

*He rescues the poor when they cry out,  
the oppressed who have no one to help.  
He shows pity to the needy and the poor  
and saves the lives of the poor.*

Saint Paul's message to the new Christians in Rome extends to us. We are all in this together and are meant to serve one another in love. *"May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to think in harmony with one another, in keeping with Christ Jesus. ... Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you."*