



# FROM THE CHAPLAIN'S DESK

## BEING CARRIED BY CHRIST

BY MS. RERECICH

It is now January, the distraction of Christmas in all its commercial glory is behind us and retail stores have been stocking their shelves with the next commercial distraction, Valentine's Day. According to the secular world, Christmas was over on December 26th. However, in the Catholic Christian reality, Christmas officially ended on January 9th, with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord. It takes a few weeks to let the mystery of the Incarnation settle deep in our souls. We now go into Ordinary Time in the Catholic Church calendar, yet nothing is ordinary about the times in which we are living. What has become ordinary and normal are the safety protocols we have come to know so well.

I know that Advent, the time leading up to Christmas, ended several weeks ago, however, Advent is all about waiting: waiting for Christ, waiting for God's kingdom to be ushered into reality.

Sometimes, life's circumstances converge with the religious seasons and make them more tangible than a good sermon. We are nearing the two-year mark of this pandemic and will be entering a third year. We are getting well acquainted with waiting. As a result, we are seeing first hand the various levels of difficulty that waiting this long for something to occur can provoke in us.

**"Now faith is  
the assurance of  
things hoped  
for, the  
conviction of  
things not seen."  
(Hebrews 11:1)**

As people of faith, we are always invited to bring life's circumstances into conversation with our faith, and vice versa. What does faith have to say about the events swirling around us, if it can say anything at all?

The bible story that comes to mind is the Exodus, when the Israelites were wandering in the desert for 40 years. Forty years is a very long time to be wandering, and waiting, to arrive to the Promised Land. It's been two years and we are ready to put all this behind us! The message that keeps echoing is the warning to not give up hope, not to give in to despair, or get lost in the frustrations and the distractions. We need to keep our eye on the "promised land." What is this "promised land," you ask? God's kingdom is not necessarily a geographical location. God's kingdom is both here and now, and not yet. It is made evident in how we treat each other, how we include others, in our manners and policies that are just.

It is an understatement to say that these past two years have shaken us out of our complacency and we have been disturbed. I think of that line, "comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable." I believe this was originally applied to journalism or art, yet it is true of our faith. Grace finds us where we are but doesn't leave us there. There is an awakening with every challenge we face, and as a society, we have been awakened to many things in this time. Many things we have come to learn has been really troubling. It has overwhelmed us and the issues seem so monumental we do not know where to begin, or even if our little actions will make the difference we want them to.

The Israelites were warned many times to stay true to the covenant for God was true to them. He was with them day and night in the desert: a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night to light their way. The lesson here for us, here and now, is that God is faithful to us even when we may not feel it. God's presence does not rely on whether we are "feeling it." It is risky to leave our faith to rest on our emotions, on how we are feeling in any given moment. We are fallible human beings; God is greater than that and far more generous and gratuitous with mercy and compassion than we can imagine!



In light of this, I'd like to share a piece with which I'm sure you are well acquainted titled, "Footprints in the Sand." I think it's a good reminder that we do not walk this road alone. As frustrating as things are, let us put our hope and trust in the God who walks with us, knows what we are feeling, and carries us when we do not have the strength to hold ourselves up. Blessings to each of you this new year. May this new year fill us with hope and trust as God shows us what is possible if we only let go and let God.

*One night I dreamed a dream.  
As I was walking along the beach with my Lord.  
Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life.  
For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand,  
One belonging to me and one to my Lord.  
After the last scene of my life flashed before me,  
I looked back at the footprints in the sand.  
I noticed that at many times along the path of my life,  
especially at the very lowest and saddest times,  
there was only one set of footprints.  
This really troubled me, so I asked the Lord about it.  
"Lord, you said once I decided to follow you,  
You'd walk with me all the way.  
But I noticed that during the saddest and most troublesome  
times of my life,  
there was only one set of footprints.  
I don't understand why, when I needed You the most, You  
would leave me."  
He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never  
leave you  
Never, ever, during your trials and testings.  
When you saw only one set of footprints,  
It was then that I carried you."  
(by Margaret Fishback Powers)*