

Christmas Day, 2021

Dec. 25, 2021

Reflection by Sister Judith Murphy, OSB

Is 52:7-10; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18

Good morning, and Happy Christmas! There is much to catch our attention these days, all the time really with the 24 hour news cycle: Covid re-surgings, natural disasters, pain and suffering, the beauties of a starry night, today's launch of the James Webb telescope, a second Christmas dealing with the fears and needed mitigations of COVID.

Last night's service of Lessons and Carols was a gift to us all -- the possibility of refocusing on what Christmas is all about. The opportunity to hear salvation history in the Hebrew scriptures and the gospels and to sing together familiar Carols in response --was an offer of refreshment and renewal. A good reminder to appreciate the many ways of acknowledging the meaning of Christmas.

Often, we're reminded of the wonder of little children and their hopes and delights for Christmas. What about ours? Last night felt like an invitation to reawaken a sense of wonder no matter our chronological age.

This morning I watched the launch of the James Webb telescope, a most remarkable endeavor of 10,000 scientists from all around the world, working together over the past twenty years. What an accomplishment on so many levels! And when they knew the launch had succeeded, they did what we all can resonate with: together they applauded, they cheered, they hugged (while masked). There were even a couple Santa hats in this scientific assembly. In one way or another, one language or another, they expressed a collective WOW! One of the goals of all this work is to better understand the origins of all that is, our world, in the whole universe. And they shared the delight and wonder so like that of little children.

Isn't the story of salvation similar? Where did life come from? How do we best participate in the life given to us? What's it all about? In the carols, we hear that even the earth rejoices. As we endeavor to be responsible for caring for the earth that is suffering from human-caused climate change—we can hope the earth will rejoice.

The wonder of little children, the wonder and excitement of 21st century scientists...one way or another we can be energized by a re-awakening of wonder. We hear again that our God in Jesus Christ took up human, fleshly life—becoming part of all that is fleshly, incarnate—lived among us—set up his tent among us—to teach us how to live human life.

Last night I thought that a way to mark the 12 days of Christmas could be to take time each of the twelve days—to consider the words of a Christmas carol, or a Christmas story or movie: It's a Wonderful Life, The Christmas Story, Miracle on 34th street; or a poem like Auden's *Christmas Oratorio*, wherein the Magi travel thousands of miles to get to Bethlehem...and the shepherds walk many, many miles, if only over and over again from their homes to their sheep—to hear the angels' message; Auden says, for those who have seen the child, the "time being" is the most

trying time of all...and consider again what the story means to me. We are told: “No one has seen God, but if we love one another, God remains among us.”

This week I happened upon a Christmas card we sent out several years ago. It said: “Not in Bethlehem will we find Christ this Christmas, but among the people in the streets of our own cities and towns, wherever we open our hearts in peace and love...and make room.” Have a

Blessed Christmas