

## **ADVENT REFLECTION 2**

**DECEMBER 4, 2022**

**Last week, we began this series of homily/studies of some of the poetry of Ann Weems with her invitation to come to Bethlehem and there find “our kneeling places”. In this week’s work, she continues...**

### **THE COMING OF GOD**

**Our God is the One who comes to us**

**in a burning bush,**

**in an angel’s song,**

**in a newborn child.**

**Our God is the One who cannot be found**

**locked in the church,**

**not even in the sanctuary.**

**Our God will be where our God will be**

**with no constraints,**

**no predictability.**

**Our God lives where our God lives**

**and destruction has no power**

**and even death cannot stop**

**the living.**

**Our God will be born where our God will be born,**

**but there is no place to look for the One who comes to us.**

**When God is ready**

**God will come**

**even to a God-forsaken place**

**like a stable in Bethlehem.**

**Watch...**

**for you know not when**

**God comes.**

**Watch,**

**that you might be found**

**whenever**

**wherever**

**God comes.**

**( from KNEELING IN BETHLEHEM, Ann Weems © 1980 Used by Permission of  
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**We were travelling from Amman Jordan towards Jerusalem through the wilderness. Most of the bus ride was boring, as the landscape remained constant – rolling hillocks of exposed rock and sand stretching to the horizon and beyond. The monotony broke as we began to climb a rather impressive mountain and emerged on the summit where we were to stay overnight and spend the next day at a place called Petra.**

**Petra was an incredible discovery – a complete city carved from the rock of the desert. Each “building” was actually the interior of the hills and the colours – oh the colours – were spectacular. Reds and yellows and oranges and blues – all formed as rain seeped through the membranes of the rocks and bled out on the surface, turning each place into a rainbow. The most impressive building was the Treasury which had been fronted by a huge portico of columns. You might know of it if you have watched Indiana Jones and The Treasure of the Lost Ark- it is the huge structure Indiana sees as his camel makes the**

last turn down the Suq and enters the city. This was a huge WOW moment for us, because until the moment that we made the same turn on our “ships of the desert” I did not believe what our guide told us about being open to the surprises of the desert places.

Leaving Petra the following morning, we bussed across more of the same “dead places” until we stopped for lunch on the side of a wadi (a dried up stream bed) and David told us to go and find a quiet place ( but within “ shouting distance” from our camp}. I set out with my copy of The Good Book as my INTENTION was to spend the time reflecting on some Scripture. Nestling between two rocks, I leaned back and stared towards the horizon. I became fascinated with the heat waves as they rose and fell, twisting and turning the landscape into a wondrous ballet for the senses. As I stared towards the horizon, I became aware of the immense silence which surrounded me. It was both peaceful and a little frightening, very disorienting to say the least when I heard a sound – a small lizard-like creature slithered across my feet and its passage seemed like a freight train blowing through a level crossing. Dave yelled, “Lunch” and I rose without a great deal of grace and turned to where our Bedouin guides were boiling water for the sweet tea, and as I wandered back to the group, I realized that I had spent an hour without even opening my Gospels – such is the gifting of the desert places where even what seems to be empty spaces are filled with possibilities.

That evening, as we neared our destination – Mount Sinai and the monastery of Ste. Catherine - our landrovers veered off the so-called road and headed into the unknown. After a half hour or so, we stopped in the bottom of a dry river bed where we were to sleep...a night in a sleeping bag in the heart of the Sinai – this is what I had come all that distance to experience! We were told to find a place for ourselves and as I wandered and wondered where I was to kip out, I looked down and thought, “What if I put my bag into the tire track of one of the trucks?” This I did , and wonder of wonders, everything fit – what fun this was going to be!

**After a delicious meal, we gathered against the stone wall of the wadi and the Bishop announced that we were going to celebrate Eucharist. Calling me aside, he asked if I would celebrate – Bishop John had been my Father’s priest and he had been John’s organist in Ottawa at the time of Dad’s death and John felt it would be a good thing for me to offer this Eucharist in Bob’s memory. I was humbled and at the same time a little nervous – celebrating in front of your bishop is not always easy. I agreed and started to set every thing up, using an outcropping which was part of the wall as an altar. It was then that, in this place of supposed deadness, I discovered one small yellow flower clinging to the hard rockface. There was life after all! As the service progressed, we discovered a truth about the Sinai – there is no twilight to be had. One moment it is bright and sunny and the next, pitch blackness. We all turned on our flashlights to finish our time together and then it was – to bed. What an adventure that was, trying to find where each of us had laid our beds for the night, but eventually everyone was tucked in. Sitting up, all I could see in the darkness was pinpoints of light which disappeared as everyone turned off their torches and settled in. Again the silence was overwhelming, broken only when a few of us decided to pull a “Waltons” – Good night John; good night Joan; good night Bill and on and on..**

**What a discovery – that even in the deadest of places physically and emotionally and spiritually, there is life just waiting to surprise you. Advent is the season of surprises, what I call the “Gotchas of God”, as God just waits for us to find our kneeling place where we can simply be still and nestle into His presence. It is what Isaiah writes of when he says, “The people who walked on darkness have seen a great light; on them has light shined.” In this time of waiting and preparing the way, dare to stop everything you are**

**doing from time to time, retreat for a moment into your quiet and lonely place where you can nestle into a silence and say, “Speak Lord, for your child is listening.”**

### **THINGS TO THINK ABOUT**

- 1. Have you ever had a time like the one I described above and as Ann writes about when you were as C. S. Lewis describes it “surprised by joy?”**
- 2. If you were to speak to God today, for what surprises would you thank the Lord?**
- 3. Where do I find God? Where does God find me?**
- 4. How can I become a person more open to the great AHA!s of God in my life?**