

“Mary laid him in a manger ... because there was no room for them in the Inn”

The creation of our Christmas creche here at The Mount is an art installation that takes the entire season of Advent to create. The old barnwood structure is assembled in sections – usually around the first or second week. It is heavy and rustic. Gradually the sides and roof are adorned with evergreen boughs and tall grasses from our restored prairies and the inside is furnished with bales of straw and finally the walls with holly branches. The final week of Advent then is usually reserved for the placement of our visiting Holy Family figures made of paper mache. This year while Mary and Joseph were taking up residence in our humble little shed the cold snap hit with fierce wind and snow. It felt cruel and inhumane placing them out in that bitter cold. That is when the warm spotlight shining on the feeding trough where the Prince of Peace would be placed took on added meaning for me.

This stark scene gave me pause to think of the millions of refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers across the world who are forced to sleep out in the cold – fleeing from oppressive poverty, war, and the brutal effects of climate change – they seek a better life for their children -they seek a warm welcome. In contrast I consider my own soft and privileged life and the comfort that I have received by so many who have provided for me. As I am grateful for their sacrifices I am also compelled to speak out on behalf of those still left out in the cold.

I am grateful for my parents who made sure that we were always bundled up before braving the Minnesota winters and I remember the hot suppers that awaited us when we came home from outdoor play on the frozen pond or our after-school jobs. And Dad made sure that the old farmhouse was warm in those cold months by placing strawbales around the outside walls. Now I believe that it is our turn to give of ourselves and provide for others. As we have received, now it is our turn to provide a warm welcome for others. In so doing we open the doors to Christ and his Gospel.

And you come to mind, the many parishioners, friends, friars, family members and fellow sojourners who have offered me warm welcomes, kindness, mercy and comfort during my life sojourn. And I am thankful to God and to you.