

I remember the first time I saw a firefly I was about 10 or 12 years old. We were visiting family in Chicago in the summer and nightfall came and suddenly there were all these tiny lights floating outside. I didn't know what they were, since they don't live out here. When my cousin told me they were fireflies I was fascinated. They made me smile and laugh and simply stare in wonder. I think it is similar for the young child or young adult who sees snow falling for the first time. It is so beautiful and amazes them.

I see amazement in the eyes of brand new parents or even grandparents. When they hold that tiny infant, so delicate and vulnerable and yet so incredible and beautiful - a part of their parents and yet not, needing them and yet already minds and personalities of their own. There is a profound sense of duty on the part of those new parents, but not without a little fear as well.

Now we step into that field where shepherds are probably far apart from each other, with their flocks on a lonely night. Nothing but the smelly sheep and their occasional "baa," as one runs into the other or a young one tries to get some milk from mom. And suddenly there is something wonderful appearing in the sky, even more amazing than a firefly or snowfall. An angel tells of an event beyond dreams or wishes for a better world. God is visiting his people! The One who dreamed it into being, who was present in its creation, in our

creation. This One whose very being is placed into two human hands to be held and cared for, delicate and vulnerable and incredibly beautiful, this One who will somehow, beginning in this way, forever alter hearts and minds, turning them away from what is selfish, toward what is self-less.

But, as one pastor put it, in order to get there we have to hold the baby. That profound sense of duty on our part, mixed with some fear, some trepidation at what really has been given us: *Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Prince of Peace*. Or as Titus puts it, our *blessed hope* – listen for that phrase again when we are praying at the altar. Hope because in turning toward the Creator made totally vulnerable we can be delivered from “*all lawlessness*” and be cleansed, “*eager to do what is good.*” And I think we have to tell the story every year so that we don’t forget – not the story, but the depth and expanse of the trust placed in us, in humanity and what is good. We have to hold the baby – and more.

Like most of us, probably Mary and Joseph may have thought, “if we can just get Jesus into adulthood, past the stages of infancy and childhood when they are so vulnerable, he’ll be OK. He’ll be able to take care of himself.” Not imagining what was to come. But the Creator, who lives in all time, trusted us enough that we would learn to change, to be filled with the wonder of birth, and of resurrection. And if that Creator does not lose hope in us, then neither must we lose

hope in ourselves. We have much to do and much to give, and sometimes we forget that too.

There is a powerful little Peanuts comic strip where Charlie Brown, who often seems to give up hope, has broken his piggy bank to buy Christmas presents. He triumphantly proclaims that he has \$9.11 and will be able to buy everyone something special. But ever-positive Lucy jumps in and says, “\$9.11 isn’t very much to buy everyone a present ... they will have to be very cheap presents.” And from somewhere within, Charlie Brown touts back, “Nothing is cheap if it costs all you have!”

Emmanuel, God with us in flesh – it cost all he had – may we be lifted up this glorious season, to do the same! *Our blessed hope!* God is with us!

Puedo ver en los ojos de los nuevos padres o abuelos la maravilla de sostener a un bebé recién nacido, abrazar a ese pequeño bebé, tan delicado y vulnerable y, esa experiencia es, tan increíble y hermosa, una parte de sus padres y, aun no, necesítandolos y, ya son mentes y personalidades propias. Hay un profundo sentido del deber por parte de esos nuevos padres, pero también existe un poco de miedo también.

Es en ese asombro y ese riesgo que Dios eligió venir a nosotros. Aquel cuyo ser mismo hizo toda la creación. Es coloca en dos manos humanas para ser sostenido y cuidado, delicado y vulnerable e increíblemente hermoso, este que de alguna manera, comenzando de esta manera, cambiará para siempre los corazones y las mentes, alejándolas de lo que es egoísta, hacia lo que es desinteresado.

Pero para llegar allí tenemos que sostener al bebé. Ese profundo sentido del deber de nuestra parte, mezclado con algo de miedo, cierta inquietud por lo que realmente se nos ha dado: "Consejero admirable", "Dios poderoso", "Príncipe de la paz" O como dice Tito, "Cristo nuestra esperanza". Tenemos que sostener al bebé, y más que eso.

Como la mayoría de nosotros, probablemente Maria y José hayan pensado: "si podemos llevar a Jesús a la edad adulta, más allá de las etapas de la infancia cuando son tan vulnerables, él estará bien". Podrá cuidarse solo". Sin imaginar lo que vendría. Pero el Creador, que vive en todos los tiempos, confió en nosotros lo suficiente como para que

aprendamos, cambiemos, nos llenemos de la maravilla del nacimiento y de la resurrección. Y si ese Creador no pierde la esperanza en nosotros, tampoco debemos perder la esperanza en nosotros mismos. Tenemos mucho que hacer y mucho que dar, y a veces también lo olvidamos.

Emmanuel, Dios con nosotros en carne, costó todo lo que tenía, ¡que podamos ser levantados en esta gloriosa temporada, para hacer lo mismo! Nuestra bendita Esperanza! ¡Dios está con nosotros!

