

Dear friends,

*When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy.*

Matt. 2:9-10, NRSV



Darkness descends on us very early here in Korea signaling that winter is already here. Darkness makes seeing difficult, but then, I am reminded of MLK, Jr's famous words--that "Only in the darkness can you see the stars."

Alas, living with the powerful electric lights that brighten up both the inside and the outside the buildings has left me out of touch with the natural rhythm. It has made me forget to turn my eyes to the sky when darkness falls. And, even when I do, I cannot see the stars because there is not enough darkness.

Darkness is not only brought on by the sundown. COVID-19 that has been with us for almost two years has filled the lives of multitudes with darkness. While being confronted with the reality of our fragility, the darkness has forced us to see many things like inequality that makes some much more vulnerable than others. While

many in the US refuse to be vaccinated in the name of freedom, millions of people around the world do not have access to vaccine because they live in poor countries.

This darkness has shown us so much. It has disrupted our 'normal' way of seeing. We now see what we avoided to see--suffering human neighbors, planet earth, and her other inhabited species of all kinds. We now see what we did not bother to see. Let us not forget what we have seen and are seeing. This is our opportunity to learn what God is showing us.

Advent is indeed a time that disrupts our normal way of seeing.

Advent invites us to go on a journey from light to night so that we can see the Star that will take us to where hope is born.

Advent takes us on a journey from comforts of the warm bed to a manger because our God is the God of the poor.

Advent opens our eyes to see the miracle of God's being born a vulnerable human baby to make God's love visible and tangible to all without an exception.

Let us practice turning our eyes to the sky when the night falls.

May we see the bright star and follow it to the manger where the baby Jesus is born of God's hope for us.

Have a blessed Christmas!

Unzu