

December 21, 2020

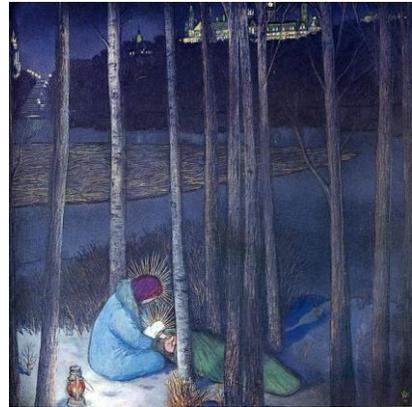
Dear Friends,

When I was teenager, somewhere I found a book of paintings and Christmas devotions created by William Kurelek, an artist born in Alberta and raised near Stonewall. In it was a series of paintings of the Holy family arriving in situations of need.

In one, Mary and Joseph sought shelter for Jesus in an abandoned gas station on a prairie highway on Christmas night. In another, a young man, homeless and camping across the river from the Parliament buildings in the snow, met the Holy family doing the same. In another, they joined a Christmas dinner hosted by the Salvation Army in a wintery downtown somewhere in Canada.

In all cases, Kurelek, who had grown up knowing poverty himself, asked in what situations we are willing to recognize Jesus and his parents in those who live in poverty in our own country...

The question is more than fair; it is easy to get distracted by the lights and gifts and feasts that are so commonly prepared this time of year. That being said, in all the vignettes in Kurelek's book, Jesus was met with kindness and faith by some of those he encountered. In each home there were signs of faith, even if the people didn't know whom it was they greeted. In each scene the young narrator found himself asking how he could have opportunity to serve those around him with compassion and as he did so, care for Jesus present in the least of these.



Across the River from the Capital
William Kurelek, 1976

This year the difficult realities of life are somehow brought into sharper relief. Many of us are living with solitude in ways we may never have done before. This year has been a roller coaster of uncertainty for many to navigate with respect to employment. The challenges for those working in health care or needing medical attention are real. Struggles surge around the globe. And yet despite these challenges, woven in and around the sadness many of us feel this year, we know of meals being delivered, cookies being made, mittens being knit and people seeking ways to make community happen. We also know the hope and determination of those who seek an end to the racism and injustice that has come so much to the fore this year...

In this world to which God chose to be born, there are limitless situations of need, but an equally limitless number of ways that need can be met.

As we and all creation long for healing...

***Break forth, O beautiful heavenly light, and usher in the morning!
May the Christ child dwell in your homes and hearts this year,
bringing hope and light to you and all you meet!***

Merry Christmas to all of you... with love, Val and Paul