

Exploring Our Call in Caring for Creation

ADFP Monthly Email

November 26, 2017



Darkness Descending over the Hudson River

Darkness

Background:

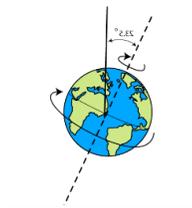
In these monthly reflections, we are strengthening our awareness of the emerging Universe considering the call issued in Laudato Sí to care for creation in an informed and responsible way.

As we approach the time of Advent in the Northern Hemisphere, the cosmic force that is most apparent is the waning of sunlight in the afternoon, and the long darkness that settles over the land until the morning sunrise.

Our feelings about darkness tend to be negative; it is grasped as the absence of light, is descriptive of loss and sadness and holds pain and hopelessness. It is sensed as the dwelling place of evil. And, we cannot forget that darkness can be a tool of racism permitting superiority over persons of darker skin color than our own.

In this time of cosmic awakening, we would like to bring into our prayer other features of darkness that may give rise to its fuller meaning and align better with Advent as the season of Hope. Before this, however, we will look briefly at what causes the long winter darkness from the scientific perspective.

We all know that our Planet pursues an annual journey revolving around the sun. Also, we are cognizant of the Planet's daily rotation on its axis, causing each new day. We are less aware of the 23.4° tilt of the Planet on its axis. While the Earth moves around the sun, the angle of the tilt always remains the same. That means that in winter the Northern Hemisphere is tilted away from the sun and the hours of sunlight are fewer, accounting for the long nights. In summer, the Northern Hemisphere is tilted toward the sun prolonging the hours of sunlight. This is entirely amazing!



A good youtube showing this can be found at: <https://www.khanacademy.org/science/cosmology-and-astronomy/earth-history-topic/earth-tilt-topic/v/how-earth-s-tilt-causes-seasons>

Ritual:

The following reflections are meant to be prayed over in the evening, after darkness has descended. Set before you an empty bowl that you use for your food in daytime. It may be a cereal bowl, a soup bowl, a rice bowl, etc. It could be a new bowl or a bowl you use every day. Let the empty bowl symbolize your desire to be fed in the dark by other sources of nourishment, *those of the soul*.



Reflection and prayer: It is important to take time to pray over the darkness and in the darkness. Otherwise, it might just pass by unnoticed. It would be sad to miss its richness, to bypass its depths, to skip over the insights it offers. The author Jan L. Richardson has written a book entitled *Night Visions: searching the shadows of advent and christmas**. The book itself is a work of art; it blesses the reader with imagery that flows from an open spirit and a yearning heart. The following reflections and poems are from her work. She says,

We require darkness for birth and growth: the seed in the ground, the seed in the womb, the seed in our souls. In the dark lie possibilities for intimacy, for rest, for healing. Although we may find journeying in the dark fearsome or confusing, it teaches us to rely on senses other than sight.

Choosing

There are other senses,
You tell us,
And when the darkness
Obscures our choices,
We must turn
To the other way of knowing
You have given us.

In the daylight
We can get by on sight,
But for the nighttime
Is our hearing,
Is our tasting,
Is our smelling,
Is our questioning,
Longing touching.

A thousand messages waiting

For our sensing
You have given us,
O God.

Reflection Question: *As the evening and the night settle around you, what sense are you most grateful for? What would you like to prolong?*

Annunciation

Not to one
But to many you have called:
Come
On the dancing wind
Come
From the deepest forest
Come
From the highest places
Come
From the distant lands
Come
From the edge of darkness
Come
From the depth of fear
And become
The bearer of God.

Reflection Question: *Where are you coming from? Do you sense yourself as bearer of God? Who most needs you as God-bearer?*

The (New) Bowl

**Take the empty bowl and turn it from right to left in your hands,
signifying the continual passage of daytime to evening throughout the Earth.
Then turn the bowl over as you sink into the night.**

In the turning of the bowl
Is the turning of the world,
And in every moment
Somewhere
The day is turning to darkness.

Bless those who welcome it,
Who long for it;
Bless those who fear it

And bid it quickly pass.
And those who touch
With delight in the night,
Bless;
And those who cry out
As the shadows give way to terror,
Bless too.
Make us bold
in the darkness
to protect each other's slumber,
and make us courageous
in the night
to guard each other's dreams.

Reflection Question: *Who calls out to you for comfort tonight? Whom do you guard? For whom do you ask a blessing?*

Horizon

So stay. Sit. Linger. Tarry. Ponder. Wait. Behold. Wonder.
There will be time enough for running. For rushing. For worrying. For pushing.
For now, stay. Wait
Something is on the Horizon.

Reflection Question: *As the Universe emerges, so do you. This evening, what beckons to you? What is on the horizon of your soul? What do you yearn for?*

Final Prayer and Blessing

*May you befriend the darkness.
May Sister Night be a tender and fierce companion.*

Glory to you source of all being
Eternal Word and Holy Spirit
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be.
World without end. Amen!

*Wanton Gospeller Press, Orlando, Florida, 2010 edition. Permission is granted for one-time reproduction of individual reflections, poems, or prayers for worship and educational purposes, provided the following credit line is included: © Jan Richardson, Night Visions. janrichardson.com