

REFLECTIONS FOR 2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT
 St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, Kent, Connecticut
Sunday December 9, 2018

I AM HERE

The Uber Experience

"I am looking for you".

"I AM HERE".

"I can't find you"

Reminiscences

Thankfully, there was Life before Uber, and more assuring experiences. We know the comfort of feeling quieted, calmed, freed. *I AM HERE.*

First ocean swim – caught in surge, knocked down by a crashing wave, tumbled and tossed, breathlessly – and then, bumped up against strong legs and arms of fast-moving Dad. "It's OK, Lovey. I AM HERE. You did well. I have you, now".

Decades later, walking with a little boy, newly-arrived in America, an after-supper stroll on a brisk night. Star-watching. Moon-gazing. Learning to say MOON in English. Dog barks ferociously from behind a chain link fence. Instant terror. The primal scream from the depths of a 2-year old. Sweep up into loving arms. Hold tightly, reassuringly. "It's OK, Boy-O. It's OK. I AM HERE. It's OK".

I AM HERE

French News Weekly. Cover Story. Fire. Dad awakens, sees flickering flames reflected on wall; wakens wife. Shouting to each other, they run to the children's bedrooms and grab them – 3 of them – explaining What and Why to half-sleeping pajama'd dreamers as they run frantically for the stairs down to the living room and the front door. Outside, across the wide front lawn, standing under a sweeping elm at the curb-end of their driveway, they tremble . . . together . . . in horror, the flames licking at every window from their finished basement to their dining room and kitchen above, on upward to the bedrooms on the second floor, on to the small attic where the children played on rainy days.

Dad frees one arm from his sobbing wife's shoulder, to enfold again his 2 sons, ages 8 and 6, and the almost-4-year old little girl. All of a sudden, he discovers she isn't in the family huddle any longer. To his horror, he sees her breaking away and running back toward the house, crying, "Touche! My kitty. Touche is up there!". Before their eyes could focus on the tiny sprinter running past their feet, the little girl had passed the firefighters and disappeared into the burning house. Dad ran after, screaming to her, "Ellie, come back! Come back! You can't go in there".

Too late. She was in. The firefighters, equally horrified, held Dad back. Forcibly. They understood. They ached. They looked at him, distraught, in shock, disbelief, but they held him back. "It's too late", they said. "I'm so sorry. It's too late".

"The house is about to come down", the Chief said firmly. "I just called my men out".

And then, a tiny voice cried into the night, “Daddy, Daddy. I got Touche. I got him. Daddy, I can’t find the stairs! Hurry, Daddy. Please, Daddy. Come and find me. I’m upstairs”. A tiny silhouette waved frantically from the small attic window.

“Jump, Baby! Jump”, cried the Dad. “Jump NOW. Jump. Fast – just like when we play Circus. I will catch you”.

“But, Daddy, I can’t see you”, the tiny, frantic little voice called back.

The firefighters already were pulling back the extension ladder, shaking their heads, instinctively pulling away from the raging heat and flames, knowing their chances were zero.

“I can’t see you, Daddy”. “I can’t see you”. The little voice suddenly became amazingly calm and deliberate. “I still can’t see you”.

“That’s OK, Baby”, the Dad’s voice reverberated above the roar of the fire. “I CAN SEE YOU. I can see YOU. Jump, Baby”, the Dad pleaded. “I will catch you, like I always do.”

She did.

He did.

Touche clung to her tiny shoulders.

I AM HERE

Like the events of that night, Advent calls to us to let go, to hear the familiar unseen voice and recognize it; to remember being loved, to become calm and assured and OK, because we’re together with Someone who is HERE.

Emmanuel . . . the God who is here. We celebrate his *Coming*, all the while knowing, in our deepest intuitions, that he is already, unfailingly, always, HERE.

Around us, among us, nonetheless, there so often is some chilled or dormant relationship that we aren’t doing much about other than grouching or trying to ignore it. Is it time, this Advent, to try again? To be the voice in the dark that unmistakably calls out to some self-isolated someone, “I AM HERE”? Could we try?

“Comfort. Comfort Thou Thy people”. We pray. God, give us the magnanimous souls to do the same, to comfort one another -- by being HERE. Now. Gently. Without judgment. Without hostility. Just here. Ready to be together, for a while more.

Reassured ourselves, may we be, each of us, this day, this Advent season, a breakthrough voice of kindness and reassurance to someone else who is trapped in feeling unnoticed, outside; isolated; unneeded. May we BE comfort to each other . . . all of us . . . together for a while more.

AMEN.