Greetings. As we stand at the threshold of our Christmas observance we continue to live under the shadow of Covid19 and its variants. For the second Christmas in a row, our routines and traditions are being disturbed, upset.

I can’t help thinking of the old Rankin and Bass television Christmas special, [*Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer,*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudolph_the_Red-Nosed_Reindeer_%28TV_special%29)when Santa turns to Mrs. Claus, the elves and the reindeer having received news of a terrible winter weather forecast and announces, “Christmas is not coming this year.” Is it possible Christmas is not coming this year? Well, of course it’s not possible. In fact, for some, it may already have come.

Many in the diocesan community are aware that my mother is in a nursing home in New York City suffering from advanced dementia. My mother is gentle and gracious by nature. The staff all call her “Grandma Jean” which is what my children have always called her.

Knowing I would not be in the New York area for Christmas this year, I went to see my mother last Saturday for a Christmas visit bringing some small gifts for her that I thought she would enjoy. My mother doesn’t really know what day it is. She doesn’t even know me. As I have shared previously, I now have the privilege of telling my mother her story each time I visit. I have loaded lots of photos of her children and grandchildren, of her parents, and even of herself at different ages, onto my phone that I show her each time I visit.

Among the gifts I brought with me was a toy replica of a scene from the original [*A Charlie Brown Christmas*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Charlie_Brown_Christmas)*.*  I remember sitting as a child with my brothers and mother watching this special when it aired on network TV one time each year. The toy replica I gave her was a skating scene with Snoopy, Lucy and Charlie Brown. It included a plastic Christmas tree that lights up. It also had an audio clip of [Vince Guaraldi’s](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vince_Guaraldi) memorable jazz music from that Christmas special.

As I showed my mother pictures and shared her own story with her, I played classical Christmas choral music that I also have on my phone. It included selections from Kings College Cambridge. My mother had been a fine musician and had sung in many choirs during her life. As we sat there, I heard the trumpet introduction to [*O come, all ye faithful*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cbB6yD244mY)on my phone. I said to my mother, “I bet you’ll know this one.” Sure enough, as soon as the choir began singing the words, “O come all ye faithful,” my mother began to sing along. I sang with her. Her roommate came over and joined us. We weren’t shy.

My mother’s alto voice was clear and lovely. She knew most of the words, even to the verses. At times, overcome with joy and emotion, I had to stop and just listen to her. Not too long after that, [*Hark the herald angels sing*](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hRq3vy7I-4)came on. Again, she sang along and remembered just about every word.

After looking at pictures and singing Christmas carols for a while, I had a special treat for her. I had loaded the video of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* onto my phone. I placed it on her table and played it for her. Again, the jazz music of Vince Guaraldi captivated her more than anything else. But then that culminating moment of *A Charlie Brown Christmas* came, when Charlie Brown cries out in exasperation, “Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?”

Linus replies, “Sure, Charlie Brown, I’ll tell you what Christmas is all about.” Linus directs that the school auditorium lights be dimmed. The spotlight is directed to center stage where Linus stands with his blanket and begins, “"*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, 'Fear not:’"*

Linus drops his security blanket at that moment and continues, *“for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.* *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'"*

Linus picks up his blanket, looks at his friend and says, “That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.” *[[1]](#endnote-1)*

I was observing my mother closely as she watched the special. As Linus began to recite the Christmas story from Luke’s Gospel,[[2]](#endnote-2) my mother began to mouth some of the words along with him. “*For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”*

In my visits with my mother, I have the honor and privilege of reminding her of her personal story. This time, however, by the grace and power of God’s Holy Spirit, I also had enormous blessing of reminding her of the greater story of which her story is a part: the story of the Savior, Christ Jesus, born for us all. Yes, the *Word made flesh* shone in that room last Saturday, light *shining* even in the darkness of my mother’s dementia.[[3]](#endnote-3)

Toward the end of my visit, I anointed my mother with healing oil, shared communion with her and played *O come all ye faithful* again. We sang it together both smiling; tears rushed down my cheeks. It was the best Christmas gift I could have asked for.

Christmas came into my mother’s dull room in a New York City nursing home last week. It is my prayer that the newborn Christ comes just as surely, and with that same heavenly light and joy that shines, that always shines, in darkness, wherever and whenever that darkness exists.

Susan joins me in wishing you and yours the most blessed and joyous of Christmases filled with the light of the newborn Christ child.

O come, let us adore him.

1. Schulz, Charles *A Charlie Brown Christmas* – According to *Wikipedia*  it was produced by Lee Mendelson and directed by Bill Melendez, making its debut on CBS on December 9, 1965 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. See Luke 2:8-14 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. See John 1:5 [↑](#endnote-ref-3)