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Pastoral Message
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Careening Toward Christmas

Christmas couldn't come soon enough for me as a child. I loved every bit of it: presents, Christmas trees, indoor and outdoor lights, holiday baking, carols, pageants, Santa Claus, nativity scenes, the St. Lucia Festival, school vacation, and holidays with our grandparents. It was truly the most wonderful time of the year.

I was befuddled by adults who began complaining about Christmas at Halloween, and I was saddened by how many seemed to resist the vortex of Christmas, sort of like how we children dug in our heels trying to stop the toboggan before we hit the barbed wire fence at the bottom of our snow-covered hills.

I learned over the years that "adult-onset Christmas resistance" had various causes. Some felt that they needed more paydays between the start and finish of holiday shopping. Others seemed to resist, because Christmas seemed to be a cruel reminder of the previous year's losses—a loved one, a marriage, or a job. I vowed as a child never to become an adult. I didn't want to be like that. I didn't want Christmas to lose its luster.

Like other children who may have uttered similar vows, I grew up. I became an adult. I developed tremendous empathy for the people who troubled me as a child. And I learned to appreciate more deeply the contributing factors to these dispositions.

And yet, as a pastor, I am reminded as I turn to the Advent texts each fall that it is precisely for those who resist the holidays most ferociously that the good news of Advent and Christmas were intended.

The prophecies that we read were first delivered to exiles in a foreign land who had lost nearly everything, and whose faith was on life support. To them—to us—come these outlandish words of hope.

To them—to us—comes the earth-shattering news that Advent is upon us and that Christmas is being ushered in by the one who knows more deeply than we can imagine all our reasons for resistance, and who wants deeply to be the antidote to our Christmas resistance.

Knowing all this, perhaps we can just tuck in our feet and enjoy the ride. Whoosh!

Arlene