

“There is a crack in everything. That is how the light gets in.” This quote is famously attributed to Leonard Cohen. If you do a little digging, you realize that it is a variation of a quote from the 13th century Muslim mystic, Rumi. Rumi, writing 800 hundred years before Cohen, noted, “The wound is the place where the light enters you.” Ah, originality. It is so elusive! However, cracks and wounds are not. They exist everywhere.

And as we reside in the darkest time of the year in the northern hemisphere (shout out to all you sun-worshipping southern hemisphere types: enjoy!), it is a time that we naturally reflect upon the light. Not so much the light that blazes and blinds amidst the high noon of summer. Rather the light that peeks through the cracks and peers ever-so-slightly from the wound. The light that doesn’t erase all the cracks and wounds, but rather emanates amidst them. The light that, ironically, needs the cracks and the wounds to be able to shine through.

Thus, the cracks and wounds--which we often perceive as weakness or that which we want to avoid or the sign of failing--may be the very things that allow us a glimpse of the light itself. The further irony is that the light, in this scenario, needs the cracks and wounds. They are not detrimental or distasteful. They are necessary. Well, maybe not necessary. Maybe they simply are. Maybe the cracks and wounds are the truth of our reality. You can’t go around them. You can’t go over them. You can’t go under them. You can’t will them away. You must go through them.

However, the wisdom of Rumi and Cohen clings to the promise that there is redemption even in, or precisely in, the cracks and the wounds. The light shines. Indeed, the writer of John’s gospel gives Rumi grist for the mill writing over 1100 years before the Muslim mystic. The variation for John follows: The light shines in the darkness and the darkness shall not overcome it. Thus, light and dark commingle in the world. There isn’t a utopic all-encompassing light. Rather, the darkness resides, confederate of the light.

The funeral of former president George H.W. Bush this past week is a reminder of the crack. The beautiful caroling (see the photo in the weekly) for dear parishioner Alice Smith witnesses to the wound. And the myriad diseases, natural disasters, and cruelty visited on our fellow humans and the created order are constant reminders that the darkness is alive and well. Yet, in the midst of these moments, we also witness to the light. The light that gets in. The light that enters you. The light that shines in the darkness. It seems that there is a particular character to this light. Again, not an absolute that quells all challenges. Rather a vulnerable and exposed reality that enters into the crack, the wound, and the darkness and shines forth from there.

Thus, the tributes for George H.W. Bush didn’t dispel the crack left by his loss. However, they were rays of light shining through, reminding us of the thousand points of light of which Bush

truly believed were ways for us to live more fully and compassionately into life together. The singing emanating from Alice Smith's porch was not the cure all. Rather, it was the glow that emanated from everyone there and allowed us to see the light that shines in the one we love and within ourselves. And all the other issues that we struggle with are never dismissed or discounted. They are real. Yet, the hope is that there is a community or a friend or a moment that we glimpse, regardless of the darkness that surrounds us, a tiny light continues to shine and will never be overcome. To many, such a view is poppy cock and wishful thinking. However, if the Christian message means anything, then surely this is where it speaks. We observe it at this time of year. Indeed, the very light of God enters into the darkness in the most vulnerable and exposed way: amidst the cracks and wounds and the darkness of the night and the cry of a tiny babe.