

Last night we observed *The Longest Night of the Year* with the annual Homeless Persons' Memorial service. Individuals who had been homeless or who continued to be homeless spoke about their lives, their struggles, and, particularly, the people in the organizations that have helped them. The event was sobering *and* it was hopeful. The remembrance of those who died in the past year among the homeless of Stamford--those who were forgotten or discarded by many--was a powerful moment. These were human lives. Lives filled with hopes and dreams and fears just like everyone of us.

Indeed, Mayor Martin's address during the service underscored the similarities that we all share. Along with the hopes and dreams and fears, we all--homeless, sheltered, male, female, gay, straight, black, white, rich, poor--all of us are vulnerable. And in our vulnerability we need other people to help us, support us, encourage us, walk with us. I've been recently musing on George H.W. Bush's election slogan from the late 80's of *1000 points of light*. I've come to the conclusion that it should be changed to *1000 points of flesh*. For while those lights do shine in our lives, they do so because of the very human, corporeal, fleshly manifestation of someone--or many someones--in our lives. Those hands, and minds, and hearts, and legs that can--and do--help us along life's way.

We are all vulnerable. This is most certainly true. And we need each other. This is a time of year that I am especially mindful of ALL the people who make St. Francis what it is, and I am deeply grateful for all of your parts in our life together and helping me in this journey. We are, and I am, blessed. Thank you.

One of the ironic aspects of the Christmas season is that it is precisely vulnerability that we acknowledge and celebrate in God becoming human. Not absolute power. Nor supreme control. Rather, our observance is centered around the birth of a tiny baby, in the first century, in a backwater town in Roman occupied Palestine, in a barn. As one clergy noted at the service last night, Jesus was born homeless. Nothing more vulnerable than that. Thus, as we mark this season, and as we find an inkling of hope as the light returns once again this season, may we know that we are not alone. We are never alone. Indeed, God is *with* us.