Voices of Sisters
Horizons
Spirituality
Social Justice



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This year, the first Sunday of Advent and the first night of Hanukkah fell on the same day. One of my close friends who recently converted to Judaism is in a virtual prayer group with several sisters, associates and friends of my congregation. On Nov. 29, she led prayer and framed it with these words that were floating around on social media: "Today Christians light the first candle of Advent. Tonight, our Jewish kindred light the first candle of Hanukkah. That's a lot of light shining in the darkness, y'all."

While there are glimmers of hope, it still feels like we live in dark times. The pandemic continues with new variants arising out of areas where the rich nations have prevented widespread access to vaccines. U.S. democracy is in drastic decline. Nearly everyone is mourning the death of a loved one due to COVID-19 during the time when pandemic precautions prevented us from saying goodbye. There is so much pain and suffering all around us. Are we paying attention?

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In my prayer group, we prayed with Marla Baker's poem "A Hanukkah Prayer for a Time of Darkness." In it, she invites us to consider what it means to be human:

> You created human beings in Your own image, with capacity
>
> To distinguish dark from light, with capacity
>
> To create holy sparks, see into the shadows and
>
> Shine light where it is dark.

What do we see when we look into the shadows?

In our world today, our migrant siblings are asking us to look into the shadows at the border: to see their lives and their humanity. Still, the Biden administration continues to ignore their cries, deny their international human right to seek asylum, and enforce the misuse of Title 42, a relic of the Trump era, to deny the right of migrants to due process. Who do we identify with? The refugee child who is God incarnate or those who devalue his existence?

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This Sunday, we will hear proclaimed in the first reading "Up, Jerusalem! Stand upon the heights; look to the east and see your children gathered from the east and the west at the word of the Holy One, rejoicing that they are remembered by God" (Baruch 5:5-9).

God remembers our migrant siblings, honors their sparks of life, accompanies them in enduring migrant camps' difficult conditions, and is present with them as they face attacks and kidnappings.

As I consider the theme of light, I think of a light in the life of my family these days: a 2-year-old and his parents who came to live with my parents after crossing the U.S. border during the brief time the Biden administration was letting asylum-seekers access the asylum process.

Last weekend, my sisters took the family to an Indianapolis tradition: the Circle of Lights tree lighting celebration downtown. They celebrated the season of light breaking through the darkness.

Our migrant siblings bring such light with them even as they've lived through great darkness.



A migrant family rests at a park with other migrants in a caravan heading to the U.S. border Nov. 18 in Huehuetán, Mexico. (CNS/Reuters/Jose Torres)

Are we listening? Are we shining our light into the darkness? Are we bringing attention to that which the powers-that-be would prefer remained hidden?

As Baker asks of God in the conclusion of her Hanukkah prayer:

> Teach us once more to see into the shadows,
>
> To shed our light in all the dark corners and to
>
> Create holy sparks for all humankind.

Today, Dec. 3, more than 70 sisters will gather outside of the White House to call on the Biden administration to end the immoral and inhumane misuse of Title 42. We will be joined by advocacy partners and a migrant who was separated from his family and expelled under Title 42. He will lift his voice to shine a light in the

darkness of the continued misuse of Title 42.

Will you join us in our advocacy?

This story appears in the **Advent** feature series. View the full series.