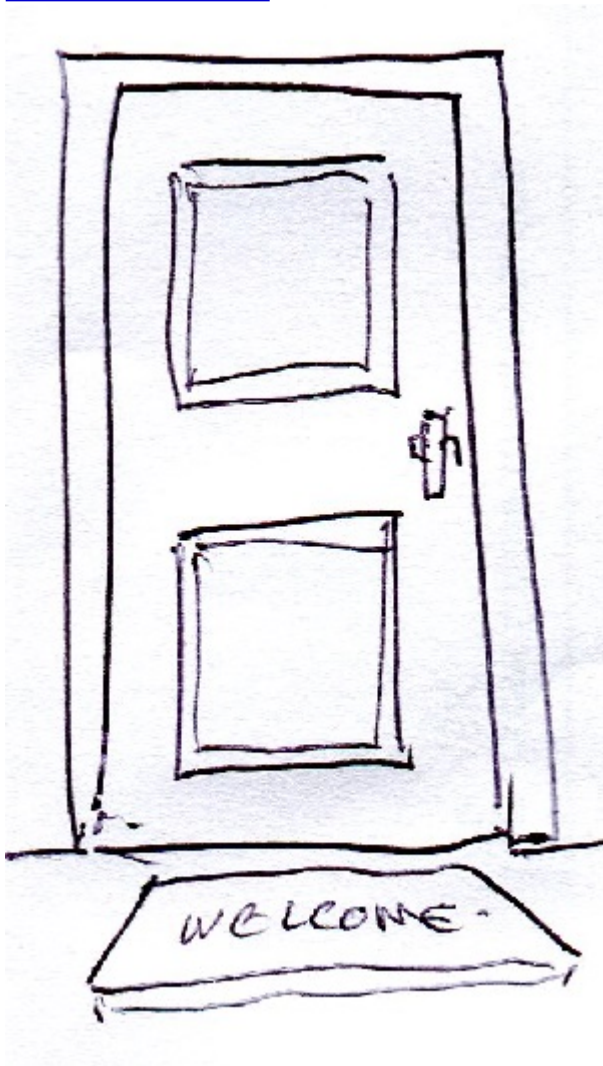


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by Pat Marrin

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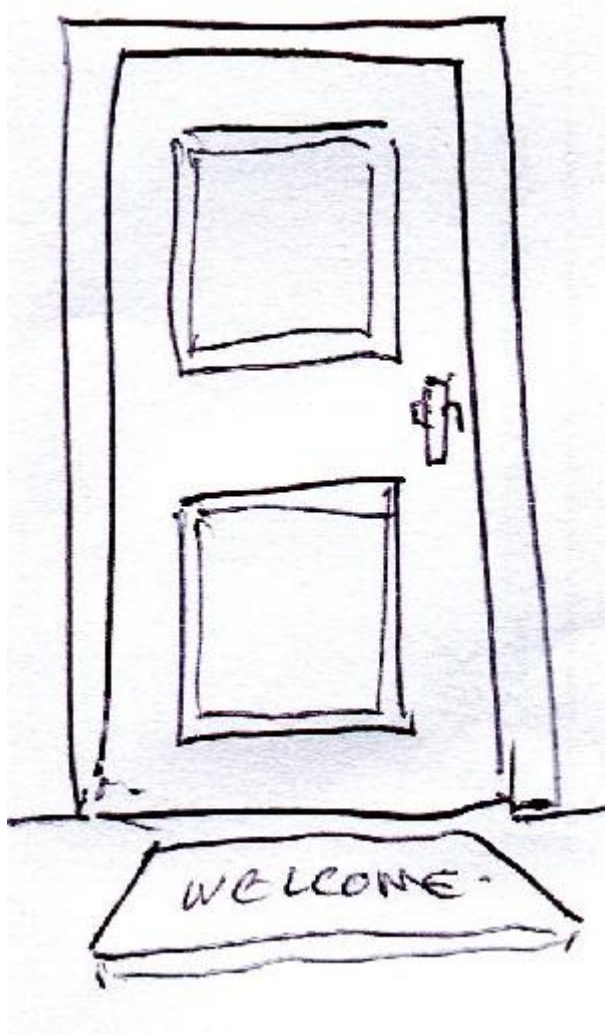
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December 30, 2020

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“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling place among us” John 1:

*1 John 2:18-21; John 1:1-18*

After a year marked by a devastating pandemic and institutional turmoil, people seem eager to leave the year 2020 behind and welcome 2021. January is named for the Roman god Janus, doorkeeper between the past and the future. We leap across his threshold and celebrate the new year as a kind of annual do-over, resolving to apply the lessons of yesterday to a wiser, better tomorrow.

The Prologue to John’s Gospel is the Lectionary’s last reading of the year, and it explicitly points us forward with the first words of Genesis: “In the beginning.” We begin by stepping back to view the mysterious plan of God from before Creation,

when the Word was the divine template for the universe, pre-existent with God and the source of all life.

This same Word of God is incarnate and has accompanied us in the daily scriptures this past year, enlightening our minds and hearts with the words and example of Jesus. During his life he demonstrated what the *Imago Dei*, the divine image imprinted on us at creation, looks like when embodied in an authentic human person. The Gospel he preached was not a new or heroic way of life, but the basic user's manual for an ordinary human life as God intended it. If we live as Jesus did, we will find the joy and peace that comes naturally from living in balance and right relationship with creation, God and one another.

John's Prologue describes the light that came into the world in Jesus, a light the world resisted, preferring to live in darkness, preferring self-interest to community, privilege and personal gain to mutual love and the common good. "He was in the world that had come to be through him, but the world did not know him." The world did not recognize its own Creator and Savior. "But those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God."

Despite this resistance, God did enter human history. "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling place among us." The Christmas story is announced by angels, then overshadowed by rejection and threats. Jesus, the most authentic human being to walk the earth, enters the human story as a refugee, then an outcast, a wandering prophet with nowhere to lay his head. After his death and even after his resurrection, Jesus became a stranger on the road who disappeared among the poor, the crucified of history, his glory hidden to all except the eyes of faith.

The *Imago Dei* is everywhere but hidden in plain sight among the millions of people in our world for whom 2020 was a very difficult year, like every year. Among our new year's resolutions, is there room for one about recognizing and welcoming them to join us in crossing the threshold of hope in 2021?

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