About a year ago, I was on vacation in western Canada with my aunt and my uncle, along with a couple of my cousins, nieces and nephews. Our original plan was to spend 2 days and 1 night on Vancouver Island to do some local sightseeing in Victoria and other places. Vancouver Island is, I would say, about the side of Long Island and there are plenty to see and play there. Now, if you know anything about the Pacific Northwest, the weather can be very unpredictable, especially during the Fall/Winter season. One day it can be sunny and the next day a monsoon can develop and it can rain for days consecutively.

 On the day we embarked on the ferry to go on to the Island, the weather forecast called for a storm to come ashore with torrential downpour and high wind for the next two days. We were debating whether we should still go or not. Well, we decided that since we’ve come this far and we’ve made all the reservations already, we might as well stick with our plans and we can always choose to do something indoor if it gets too rainy.

 As it turned out, it was the perfect storm that hit us. The weather deteriorated rapidly upon our arrival with heavy rain and gusty wind. Everything was shut down the next day including the ferry service that connects the Island with mainland. Great! All the tourists were now stranded on the Island with no way out. Even the airport was shut down. Suddenly we realized that we have a major problem at hands.  **Where are we going to stay for the night?** We have no reservation! The hotel where we were staying the night before told us that they were completely booked and there was **NO VACANCY** left.

 So we decided that we would drive around from town to town through the storm, hoping that we might be able to find a place where there might be vacancy. All we were looking for was a couple of rooms for us to rest our heads, take a hot shower and FREE hot-breakfast the next morning would be nice also.

 One motel after another, all we could find along the way were these bright red neon signs outside that say “**NO VACANCY**”.

 After driving for about an hour, it was about to get dark and we became more and more desperate with 3 hungry and impatient kids screaming in the back of the cars. Suddenly from a foggy distance, we noticed a sign that does not appear to have the word **“NO”** in front of the word **“VACANCY”.** We confirmed with one another to make sure that we were not dreaming. Lo and behold, we were right. There is “VACANCY” in this place. We quickly drove up and went in to the front desk inquire about their room availabilities. Yes, they had only 3 rooms left!!! Hallelujah! All of us could breathe a collective sigh of relief. This, by far, was one of the most desperate and memorable moments that I’ve experienced with all the years that I’ve gone on vacation.

 In the Gospel reading that Ashley and Joseph read for us earlier, we also found Mary and Joseph, the earthly parents of Jesus, desperately looking for a place to stay. They too were riding out another storm on the horizon before it hits. Their night was definitely not “silent”. It was not “calm” nor was it “bright” either. Mary and Joseph had travelled a long long way, on their way back to Joseph’s hometown, in order to be registered by the decree of the governor. Mary and Joseph were poor, young engaged couple and she was mysteriously got pregnant and was about to give birth at any moment now. This was indeed a nervous time for this young couple not knowing what to expect. There was a lot of fears and anxieties. Furthermore, Mary was probably not in the best of mood, especially after a long day’s journey. It was getting late at night and they still had not found a place to stay for the night, if only there were vacancy in the inn. Everywhere they went, they were met with many “**NO VACANCY**” signs on the outside.

 A storm of a different kind was brewing upon the horizon, yet Mary and Joseph were on a frantic search for a room to stay. Didn’t the innkeepers know who they were dealing with? There’s gotta be a “presidential suite” for the new king to be born for the night. But the only room that’s available for them was in some stable in the back. There was probably no bed, no hot-shower, no heat, no WiFi or electricity….with probably lots of bed-bugs and smells also. Nevertheless, it was to be a quiet but a comfortable night…a good night for the new Savior of the people to be born under those unforeseen and extreme circumstances.

 Come to think of it, the inns at Bethlehem were NOT the only place where the Christ-child and his family have been turned away. **Our hearts** **have ALSO turned away the Christ-child**. We’ve rejected the light and we’ve chosen to stay in the darkness and the shadow of sins. We have from time-to-time refused to admit Christ into our lives. We would put up the “**NO VACANCY**” sign at our door, rejecting Christ and telling Him that He is NOT welcomed in our lives. Not now! Go somewhere else. Come back some other time when I’m FREE. Just leave us alone. Don’t call us, but we’ll call you only when we need you. How many times have we said “NO” and denied Christ in our lives, this month, this week, or even today?

 Throughout this Advent Season, a number of us have been challenged us to “de-clutter” our lives and to make room for Jesus. Nowadays many people are finding ourselves not having enough room for our “stuff” to put in? There are more and more of these self-storage places popping up for people to rent, just so they can put “stuff” in.

 We simply have too much “stuff” going on in our lives that often distract us or blind us from the truth and the meaning and purpose of Christ’s mission here on earth. We’ve craved darkness and sins over light and righteousness. These distractions have hindered us and robbed us of our genuine relationship with God. Instead of drawing closer to Christ, we have found ourselves drifted further and further apart.

 When was the last time we have a meaningful heart-to-heart conversation with God, without any interruptions or distractions in our lives? When was the last time we could sit down quietly, be still and listen to what God has to say, not just what we want God to affirm what we want to hear? God does not simply work that way! God is not our beck-and-call upon our demand, when we want or where we want Him.

 **If Christ were to knock on our doors demanding a place to stay in our hearts right now, will there be room for Him to stay tonight?** But we must understand, Christ does not just come once a year on Christmas Eve, Christ is constantly knocking at our doors, prompting us to open our hearts for Him every day. ***Listen! What do you hear? Can you hear him knocking in our hearts now?***

 When Christ knocks, do we simply just ignore Him, put on our headphones, turn up the volume and move on to go about our everyday business as usual? hoping that He would eventually give up on us and move on to someone else?

 Unfortunately I have bad news for you. Our God is a persistent God who does not easily give up on His own. God would have had plenty of opportunity to give up on His own people, but God chose to send them God’s very best – His First Fruit so he may die for humanity. God keeps on knocking at our doors, refusing to give up until we open and respond back. God knows who we are and sees our limitations. We pray that God will soften our stubborn hearts and deliver us through God’s mercy. When the day comes, there will be **NO WAY OUT**….we will be held accountable with ALL that we’ve done, as well as ALL that we’ve failed to do.

 Through God’s unconditional grace and love, God has sent His beloved Son as a GIFT to us - a GIFT to this world, wrapped in swaddling cloth waiting for us to open this treasure and be surprised. Many have rejected this gift in the past and many more are still rejecting Him today. Nevertheless, God has invited us to open up our doors to Him and to invite others to come in and to seek shelter from the raging storm outside.

 This is where we may find peace and hope in the midst of a chaotic and turbulent world that we live in today. Through Christ, God has sent us an open invitation for anyone to come into the house of the Lord, with no hesitation or reservation needed. The invitation is out there for anyone to accept but this invitation must be taken seriously and be willing to share it with others. Christ has invited us to come....Just come as we are!

 As Christ declared that **in our Father’s house, there are many rooms, and He has gone ahead to prepare a room for each of us. He shall return once again to take us to be with the Father. Where He is, there we will be also.[[1]](#footnote-1)** **There is plenty of “VACANCY” in God’s house for us to share.**

 May we honor God by sharing God’s blessings and extending God’s invitation to ALL those around us. May we come into God’s house by seeking shelter from our storms and by making room for others to experience the fullness of God’s love. This is the true meaning of this Christmas night when Christ is born to us all. A light has shined out of the dark and all of God’s people shall be blessed. May this newborn Christ-child fill the voids of our hearts with God’s blessings of **HOPE**, **PEACE, JOY,** and **LOVE.**

 ***“Let every heart, prepare Him room, and let Heaven and Nature sing.”* *Come, All Ye Faithful. Let us worship and adore the newborn King!*** In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *John 14:2-3* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)