

I was standing and dripping in line at the grocery store last week during one of the huge downpours. The person in front of me turned and we shrugged and she said “I guess we can’t complain when the east coast is caught in the polar vortex.” And we chatted about how awful below zero weather must be.

As a hospital chaplain I stopped in a room where a woman was facing a tough diagnosis and a lot of pain. I introduced myself and asked her how she was managing. “I hurt,” she said weakly. ‘And I am scared,” she said weakly. “But I can’t complain. There are so many here sicker than I am.”

Sometimes we hesitate to acknowledge our own pain and our suffering for in the bigger picture they seem...minimal. However, maybe we should sometimes see the smaller picture—our picture. The cold in the East was awful and claimed lives. The polar vortex is tough. But the rain here caused accidents and destruction. Those without homes were left wet and shivering with hypothermia threatening. There were swift water rescues. Buildings were flooded. Damages were expensive. Yes there were a lot of really sick people in the hospital. But the woman I visited had reason to be frightened. Her pain was real. Yes there were others who were sicker than she was, but she was really sick herself.

I think we have to remember that God is with us, no matter what. God does not measure our worries or our sufferings or our pains against anyone else. No, God is with us in our smallest disappointments and in our greatest losses. God is present with us for God knows that our pain is real, our worry is real, our anxiety is real. God’s promise is to be with us always, to walk with us through every shadow in every valley.

In the words of the 121<sup>st</sup> Psalm:

*“I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my help come? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber....the Lord will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life. The Lord will keep your going out and our coming in from this time on and forevermore.”*

Dear God, help us to know you are with us at all times and in all places, in every moment of our lives. We thank you for your constant and abiding presence. Amen.