

“At this table everyone is welcome.  
At this table everyone is seen...  
At this table everybody matters...  
No one falls between.”

Idina Menzel and Jonas Myrin

## Christmas, 2021

Dear Family and Friends,

When I was a child we sang a song in Sunday school, a simple melody, a simple lyric that went like this: “Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world, red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in his sight. ...”

This cold night as snow flurries briefly, as skies darken, as Christmas carols swell, I string lights on my four-foot Frasier fir. Living alone I am a solitary thinker, perhaps at times an over-thinker. Living alone at Christmas has its distinct challenges, and tears are often near the surface of my thoughts, blurring my vision unexpectedly. It has been five Christmases since Bob died. I miss him every day, know I will miss him always.



This cold night, winding lights round and round, feeling the joy that decorating our home always brings (I will say “*our* home” forever), I am thinking of the people I love, the people lost to Earth who have gained Heaven, but also the ones who remain. Precious family, dearest friends, clients who it is my honor to serve and even, yes, our whole world of God’s creatures, made in His image, Imago Dei, “red and yellow, black and white.”

I’ve been playing the lovely Idina Menzel song, *At This Table*, musing how the lyrics conjure what this season is all about. “At this table there will be no judgment, at this table mercy has a seat.” My thoughts morph to what an exquisite and particular array of skin tones, faces, ages, gifts, experiences, sorrows, joys, longings, pains of every sort, and *stories* we earthlings share. We, each one unique, are bonded by our very humanity.

This cold night, while putting the finishing touches on the tree, I think of all who make my life easier, support me as I continue to navigate widowhood the fifth Christmas since Bob died. I do not take for granted “family.” I am beyond blessed not only to be considered but to be embraced by each

one, youngest to oldest. Deep years-long friendships shore me up and allow me to reciprocate. And speaking of reciprocation, I learn much from my clients, people of courage, willing to face some of the hardest and saddest times in their lives with not only grace but with humor! And then there are those who keep me going in practical ways: Natalio who cares for my acre of land, Janina who lovingly cleans my home with care. Adrian, now residing in Mexico with Jessica and their growing boys, texts me every week with greetings “we love you Tia, God bless you,” honoring some of my husband’s last words, “please take care of April.”

“Red and yellow, black and white . . . .” I pray to have room at the table of my heart, for every color, every creed, every story as *all* are precious in His sight. And for you I pray you will know that you are seen, that you matter, and even more that you are loved.

May the peace of Christmas give you hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "April", with a large, flowing loop at the beginning and a long, sweeping tail.

April

“What keeps the wild hope of Christmas alive year after year in a world notorious  
for dashing all hope is the haunting dream that the child who was born  
that day may yet be born again even in us.”

Frederick Buechner

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