

Why Some Trees Are Evergreen

Here is a Cherokee Indian children's story that seems to fit in with the Season of Advent and evergreen trees, and it goes like this:

When the plants and trees were first made, the Great Mystery gave a gift to each species. But first he set up a contest to determine which gift would be most useful to whom. "I want you to stay awake and keep watch over the earth for seven nights," he told them. The young trees and plants were so excited to be entrusted with such an important job that the first night they did not find it difficult to stay awake. However, the second night was not so easy, and just before dawn a few fell asleep. On the third night the trees and plants whispered among themselves in the wind, trying to keep from dropping off, but it was too much work for some of them. Even more fell asleep on the fourth night.

By the time the seventh night came, the only trees and plants still awake were the cedar, the pine, the spruce, the fir, the holly, and the laurel. "What wonderful endurance you have," exclaimed the Great (God) Mystery. "You shall be given the gift of remaining green forever. You will be the guardians of the forest. Even in the seeming dead of winter, your brother and sister creatures will find life protected in your branches." Ever since then all the other trees and plants lose their leaves and sleep all winter while the ever greens stay awake.

This tale does not use the usual Advent symbols of light and darkness. It talks about greenness in the midst of barrenness and associates this greenness with the ability to stay awake. "Staying awake" is standard code in spiritual literature. It means remaining aware of our life-giving connection to divine reality, even when inner and outer forces mitigate against it. Just as the light in the darkness reminds us of this truth, so does the green leafed tree in the leafless forest.

The Season of Advent calls us to be aware, to prepare ourselves for the coming of the Christ Child.

When you are aware that Christmas is not merely one day, but a season, and that Advent is a time of preparation for this great event of love, you will know that...

YOU ARE LOVED,

Deacon Dan