

Reflecting on our Advent journey four years ago

Four years ago today John and I boarded a plane for China.

We had never flown together before—and never planned to. But our first child, our son, was waiting for us in China. And there was only one way to reach him. So to China we went.



I felt a whole bundle of emotions: anxiety, excitement, joy, and the enormous responsibility that comes with becoming parents for the first time. And, because it was the first week of Advent, I remember thinking of Mary and Joseph and wondering whether they experienced similar feelings as they traveled by donkey to Bethlehem.

They must have had many worries. Would they find a place to stay? Would the people be friendly? When would they meet their baby boy? How would life change as they became a family of three? Which would be more difficult, the trip to Bethlehem with an expectant mother or the trip home with an infant?



They also had tremendous faith. They knew God would provide, and that His angels were watching over them at every step. But they must also have known it wouldn't be an easy journey. And they must have had to rely on their faith as they welcomed their newborn baby in a stable full of animals, far from their home and families.

Because Advent 2009 was the one when John and I became parents, every Advent brings back those memories of waiting and our journey to China to become parents.



I never imagined that we would become parents on the other side of the world, that we would hear our son's first English words in a hotel room in China, that there would be such a blending of sorrow and joy in my first moments holding my son. Yet that was our journey to becoming a family. And I wouldn't trade a moment.

So here we are in the first week of Advent once more. I am not preparing to board a plane to go to China. But I am trying to prepare myself to welcome another baby, the Christ Child, who is not just mine, but also yours and, really, the world's.

This time of year is always full of challenges, balancing responsibilities, and adjusting expectations. This year I want to set as much as I can aside and focus on what matters. Spiritually I want to get on a plane, leave it all behind, and keep my eyes on the Child I will get to embrace at the end of the journey.

I don't know whether that's possible in the midst of all the pre-Christmas busyness,

but that's my goal this Advent season. What's yours?