

December 25, 2022
Christmas Morning with the Bishop
The Cathedral Church of St. Paul, Detroit
The Rt. Rev. Dr. Bonnie A. Perry

I adore Christmas. It is the beginning of something new and the starting again of something old, the beginning of something ancient all over again.

Although this is a night and a day and season that I yearn for, my soul pines for it; I frequently feel as if I am not really worthy of telling anyone about Christmas.

Am I a true enough believer? I do not know. For, perhaps like some of you, I [too] have my doubts, my fears, and periodic lapses in faith. It's not always pretty.

To make up for these inadequacies, I do what I can to prepare for this twenty-four hour of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day and the 11 days that follow.

My tree is up early, chosen with an enormous amount of care. This year we drove out to a Christmas tree farm and cut it down ourselves.

As I unwrap them and then hang them, I revel in the history and story each ornament brings. I play Christmas carols long before the Advent police allow.

I sit in the dark at night, with the tree lights twinkling waiting, thinking about praying and hoping to hear an angel singing.

All through Advent, I fret over what I might say in a Christmas sermon that will touch my soul and by extension yours as well. This goes on for weeks, and as I said, it's not always pretty. And then eventually I let go. I sigh, and I cry. I sob for all that is not right in the world, the injustices, the sadness, the wars, then for all of my failings and shortcomings, and in some despair for all the things I hope for, long for and pray for that I have no idea how to bring about. Then I say, without thinking words that come unbidden, words that hover around my sighs of sadness...

"In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken when Quirinius was the Governor of Syria. Each went to their own town to be registered and Joseph..."

As I speak these words, mouth these words, hear these words, a pathway to our God opens up again, the restlessness that swirls in my soul and in our world for a moment stills and I can see the light in the darkness, I can hear an angel speak, and I know for a moment, that I like you am called by God to begin again, anew, filled with these words called to ponder them in our hearts and to live them in our world. Again. Anew.

So on this night, on this day, I say to you as the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go and see this thing which has been made known to us."

If you are the true believer with nary a doubt—God calls you—Let us go.

If you are someone who once was secure in all your beliefs, but then the hardness of life happened—God Calls you—Let us go.

If you are someone who wants to know holiness, but steadfastly refuses to risk searching for it because what happens if you do not find it, better to have never looked at all, this is what you tell yourself—if that is you—now is the time--God Calls you—Let us go.

And we who have, as the poet W. H. Auden says, “We who have stayed up so late, attempted, quite unsuccessfully—to love all of our relatives and in general grossly overestimated our powers.” (For the Time Being)—we too—God Calls us too—Let us go.

God calls us. God comes to us. God beckons us, gives us a promise of change, for each of us is Good Enough, Holy Enough, God enough, for God is with us, this day, this night, and the next—God Calls us—Let us Go.

For if we dare to seek Christ, if we dare to look intently for the newborn baby Jesus, then we like the shepherds will be changed.

We will see again the way he lived in our world, the way he lead, the way he loved.

We will see ways that are different perhaps from our first inclinations.

We will see what it means to turn our cheeks in response to insult,

to give our coat to the one who asks,

to violate the laws and norms of the day to include all, and break bread with all.

We will know the blessings of hope and the prophecies of promise. We will see a different way. Again for the very first time.

If we do as the shepherds did, if we go, we will know, in our souls that:

For Unto Us a Child is Born.
Unto us a Son is Given.
His name shall be wonderful Councilor,
Almighty God,
Everlasting Father,
The Prince of Peace.
Come Let us Adore Him.

Amen.

Merry Christmas
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