

How Beautiful the Light that Shines in the Dark (Christmas)

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This reflection was first posted by Audrey, fcJ on her blog [Surprising Grace](#).

All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation by our God. Sing joyfully to the Lord, all you lands; break into song; sing praise. (Psalm 3b-4)

The readings at Christmas are full of joy that seemingly cannot be contained. Our God has done a new thing, they proclaim – Christ has come! Of all the readings, though, my favourite is this more solemn passage of John's:

*What came to be through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human race;
the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it. (John 1: 3b-5)*

A light that the darkness does not overcome: that is the hope that Christmas brings to me. Our violent, divided world – and our wounded, fickle hearts – are, incredibly, the darkness into which God's everlasting light has come, in the form of a small child. **Christmas then is a yearly reminder to us of that incredible truth that God has chosen to become incarnate in the messiness of our lives, and thus given it infinite value.** Daniel O'Leary puts it beautifully when he says:

Where can the real presence and promise of the divine be physically and mentally experienced if not in the dark labyrinth of human hearts? ... And where else can there be the slightest evidence that God is an effective, invincible power healing humanity at its most desperate, most diabolic and most despairing, other than in the raw reality of our complicated, ambiguous and beautiful lives?

I had a glimpse of this divine presence recently when I was trying to help a homeless couple get medicines for their sick baby. I suspected that they were not telling me the truth about their situation, and was unhappy to think that my goodwill was being taken advantage of. But in the midst of my negativity towards them a memory suddenly came to mind: When the mother and I were just setting off to go to the pharmacy, the father came after us with something in his hand. "Don't forget this," he said. It was a little blue knitted cap, which he pulled gently over the baby's head. The tenderness of this small gesture – and his obvious concern – touched my heart. I felt in that moment that I was looking through the veil of their messy lives into the hidden treasure of love that lay beneath.

Christmas then is a time when we are invited to put on new eyes; to see God's incarnate presence in the mundane soil of our everyday lives. For:

When we sense the gold in the rubble of our lives, when we divine “the dearest freshness deep down things”, then we are living in the way of incarnation. And this changes everything. Our hearts begin to open, our eyes to shine, we breathe more easily, we face the dark confidently.

Seeing God in all things gives us the courage and confidence to truly live the lives we are meant to live.

Can we bring these “Christmas eyes” with us into the new year?

May the assurance of God’s power and presence among us fill us with a radical hope in God’s promises: that the light will not be overcome; and that our small, fumbling efforts, by God’s grace, will indeed bring about God’s reign of peace and justice in the world.

I wish you a hope-filled Christmas season!



“ Pour avoir ce nom, Fidèles Compagnes de Jésus, je donnerais tout, tout ce que je suis... ”

Marie Madeleine d'Houët

Fidèles Compagnes de Jésus

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