

“The Darkest Night Gives Way to the Brightest Morn”

“O Holy Night”

“Silent Night”

“It Came Upon a Midnight Clear”

You get the idea . . .

Tradition has it that Jesus was born at night.

Several reasons for this:

Luke’s account describes the shepherds

Out keeping their flocks by night.

The Magi, the Bible records

Followed a star until it came to rest above the stable.

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Tradition also celebrates his birth

During the darkest period of the year

December 25th, four days after the winter solstice

When the nights are longest.

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Many of our festive activities take place at night.

We reenact live nativities in the darkness of night.

We leave the comforts of home

To venture out on even the coldest of evenings

To see the Christmas decorations.

Christmas caroling often takes place at night.

And we gather in the dark on Christmas Eve

As so many have done, and will do

Throughout the differing time zones this night.

“The Darkest Night Gives Way to the Brightest Morn”

We gather to worship what came in the darkest of nights
The Light of the World.

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Jesus was born in the shadows of darkness.

They were refused a well-lit room at the inn.

And instead, had to find their way to the stable
By the light of the innkeeper’s candle.

The shepherds came in the night
Peering in from the darkness.

The Magi presented their gifts
Of Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh
From the shadows of the night.

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But Jesus was born in the dark in a different way

“Dark with Roman oppression
Dark with poverty
Dark with Herod’s jealousy
And dark with violence (Max Lucado).”

The world was a dark place then.

Following his birth, came, what is called
“The slaughter of the innocents”
King Herod’s plan to extinguish the light.

He slaughtered all male children
Ages two and under
Throughout the region of Bethlehem.

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The Gospel of Matthew records this
Along with a prophecy from Jeremiah:

**A voice is heard in Ramah
Weeping and great mourning**

**Rachel weeping for her children
And refusing to be comforted
Because they are no more.**

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The world was a dark place then.

The world is a dark place now.

The slaughter of the innocents continues unabated.

Rachel continues to weep for her children
Refusing, always refusing to be comforted
Because they are no more.

The world lies in the darkness of night.

It did then
As it has done throughout the years
As it does now.

The world lies in the darkest of nights
Waiting for the Light.

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Light entered into a dark world then.

Against the prevailing darkness
Light brought the flicker of hope.

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Hope that light would consume the darkness
That love would prove victorious over hate.

Light entered the world then.

But the darkness persists.
And we, who are born out of this darkness
And into this Light
Live the hope this Light brings.

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They say the brightest morning is born of the darkest night.

They say that night is darkest just before dawn.

They say that it is in contrast to total darkness
That light shines the brightest.

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Throughout the centuries, the Light of the world
Seems at times to diminish
At other times to increase in brightness.

But it will never be extinguished
For the Light is eternal in nature.

And this Light will always be present

Anywhere there is goodness
And purity
And innocence
And justice
And truth

Ephesians 5:8-9 For at one time you were darkness but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

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(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true).

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Jesus said to his disciples

“You are the light of the world!”

And so as we face the darkness that surrounds us

Let us light the Light of Christ to guide our way

And may they collectively

Overcome the overwhelming darkness

And may they, combined, be the dawning of a new day!

And may the One who said

Let light shine out of darkness,

Shine in our own hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6).

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Benediction:

“May God grant you the light in Christmas, which is faith

The warmth of Christmas, which is love

The radiance of Christmas, which is purity

The righteousness of Christmas, which is justice

The belief in Christmas, which is truth

The all of Christmas, which is Christ.”