

Christmas Eve Meditation  
WRCoB 12.24.19

Many of you know I like nativity scenes.

It's a good way for me  
    To etch in my heart and mind  
        The image of that Christmas so long ago.

The French word, Crèche, is another name for it.

More than 20 years ago  
    I spent Christmas in Montreal.

In the big cathedral in the heart of the city  
    In the Museum of Oratory of St. Joseph  
        They have a tradition of exhibiting crèches  
            From all over the world.

They have a collection of 700 crèches.

This year they will exhibit 300 of them  
    From 110 different countries.

Incredibly interesting and captivating.

Because, of course, all of them are so different.

Each depicts the perspective  
    From their own cultural and ethnic background.

You might see a Scandinavian crèche  
With its distinctive fair-skinned Jesus in furs.

Or you might see a dark-skinned African Jesus  
Under a grass-thatched, mud-walled stable.

The medium changes too depending on the country  
From wooden hand-carved characters  
To elaborate polished porcelain.

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The nativity scenes not only include the main characters  
Baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph

But also a few animals scattered about  
A cow, a calf, certainly sheep and a donkey.

There is a live nativity in the Mill Creek area in the Valley.

They have two live camels in their scene.

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We have a beautiful one here before us.

There is Mary and Joseph  
With Baby Jesus in the manger.

We have the angel Gabriel standing above and behind  
Blessing the entire scene.

There are the shepherds in their rougher attire  
And the Angels in their angelic wardrobe.

The three Magi are there  
With their gifts of Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh.

Though, in all actuality, there may not have been three  
And they probably didn't show up  
On the night Jesus was born.

But we need them to be there just the same.

Everyone who had anything to do with that night was there  
Including an additional character.

It is this one here.

A little boy with a drum.

Don't bother to look in your Bibles to find him.

He's not there.

He's in our nativity scene because of a song  
Entitled *Carol of the Drum*  
A very ancient Czech carol.

According to the song the little drummer boy  
Accompanied the Magi to pay homage to Jesus.

But unlike the Magi he was too poor to offer a gift.

Instead, the little drummer asked to play his drum  
For baby Jesus.

I like the addition of the little drummer boy.

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Not only do most churches

Display a Nativity Scene

Many do a Live Nativity.

They're pretty cool

And I was glad to have participated in one.

In a previous congregation I served

They've done one for 25 years

They use real live farm animals including a donkey.

The whole church, young and old, gets excited about it.

And it takes much of the church to pull it off.

If you are part of the cast

You must stand quietly for 10 minutes.

For they change characters every ten minutes

Due to the extreme cold.

It was a drive through Live Nativity.

The cars line up, slowly driving past the scene

Everyone looking in awe at the sacred scene

With carols quietly playing in the background.

All the characters stand absolutely still

All, of course, except for the animals.

One year,  
That congregation, a predominately-white one  
Built a relationship with a black church.

We shared in many different events during that year  
Including the Live Nativity.

One of the woman from the black church  
Had never done anything like this before.

A middle-aged single mother  
Who had recently joined the church.

When she got there  
She asked who she should dressed up as.

I told her why not dress as an angel?

She gave me that look  
As if to say, "Who? What? Me?"

After convincing her she'd be great as an angel  
She got dressed and prepared.

We had divided people up between first and second shift  
An equal representation of both churches in each.

She was in the first shift.

Before we went out  
From the basement of the church  
We prayed.

I prayed that everyone who might witness the Live Nativity  
Might feel moved by the Christmas Spirit  
And draw close to Christ our Lord.

That we were in a sense, evangelists  
Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ.

I also prayed that those of us  
Who participated in the Live Nativity  
Might not only be a blessing but be blessed by it.

We, then, went out to face the cold.

And there she was, my African/American sister  
Standing in the back with a couple of other angels  
Her arms raised in adoration to Baby Jesus  
Tears streaming down her face.

She experienced a grace-filled moment.

Upon seeing her crying, we all felt it.

We were experiencing the Incarnation  
Emmanuel, God-with-us.

After the ten minute shift was over  
I had to go and give this lovely woman a big hug.

I do not believe I have ever seen someone so radiant.

She was a God-sent angel among us.

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Down through the years  
Some say beginning with St Francis of Assisi

Every Christmas, we adults  
Like little children, get out our crèches.

We carefully take them out of their wrappings  
Wipe the dust off them  
And carefully set them up in a prominent place  
On display for the world to see.

A small way to express our gratitude  
For God's great gift, Jesus Christ.

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Jesus came as a light in the midst of darkness.

We look to the Christmas Event  
As light entering a dark world.

Against the prevailing darkness  
The light brings the flicker of hope.

Hope that light will overwhelm the darkness  
That love will prove victorious  
That peace will prevail.

Light enters the world at Christmas.

We live in the hope this light brings.

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Throughout the centuries, the Light of the World  
Seems at times to flicker and fade  
At other times to increase in brightness.

However, the darkness will not extinguish this Light.

For this Light is eternal in nature.

This Light is always present  
Where 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 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true).**

And so, this evening in the darkness surrounding us  
We light the light of Christ to guide our way.

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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.