

Christmas 2003

Seekers Christmas Eve Celebration

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PRELUDE

SILENCE

WELCOME The story begins long ago...

A genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of Mary,
the daughter of Anna:

Sarah was the mother of Isaac,

And Rebekah was the mother of Jacob,

Leah was the mother of Judah,

Tamar was the mother of Perez.

The names of the mothers of Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon
and Salmon have been lost.

Rahab was the mother of Boaz,
and Ruth was the mother of Obed.

Obed's wife, whose name is unknown, bore Jesse.

The wife of Jesse was the mother of David.

Bathsheba was the mother of Solomon,

Na'amah, the Ammonitess, was the mother of Rehoboam.

Ma'acha was the mother of Abijah and Asa.

Azubah was the mother of Jehosephat.

The name of Jehoram's mother is unknown.

Athalia was the mother of Ahaziah,

Zibia of Beersheba, the mother of Jehoash.

Jecoliah of Jerusalem bore Uzziah,

Jerushah bore Jotha; Ahaz's mother is unknown.

Abijah was the mother of Hezekiah,

Hepzibah was the mother of Manassah,

Meshullemeth was the mother of Amon,

Jedidah was the mother of Jehoiakim, Nehushta was the mother of Jehoiakin,

Hamutal was the mother of Zedekiah.

Then the deportation to Babylon took place.

After the deportation to Babylon

the name of the mothers go unrecorded.

These are their sons:

Jechoniah, Shealtiel, Zerubbabel,

Abiud, Eliakim, Azor and Zadok,

Achim, Eliud, Eleazar,

Matthan, Jacob, and Joseph, the husband of Mary.

Of her was born Jesus, who is called the Christ.

The sum of generations is therefore:

fourteen from Sarah to David's mother;

fourteen from Bathsheba to the Babylonian deportation; and

fourteen from the Babylonian deportation

to Mary, the mother of Christ.

LESSON 1 – The Birth of Jesus

Men: Now at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census – the first – took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his or her own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and traveled up to Judea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's house and line, in order to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first-born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn. (Luke 2: 1-7)

BRINGING IN THE LIGHT OF CHRIST

CAROL O Little Town of Bethlehem

PRAYERS

Holy One, Loving One, Incarnate One,

the stories say that you listen,

the saints say that you answer.

You, whom we call omnipotent,

You, whom we name compassionate,
hear our prayer,
receive our prayer,
let our cry come to you,
for we, like Joseph and Mary,
are looking for our true home in you.

In this celebration of the birth of the Holy Child,
we give thanks for family and friends,
for food and for shelter,
for health, and for the one, true gift,
which is your presence among us
and within us.

And we remember those who cannot celebrate:
we pray for those who mourn,
for those who are in sickness or in pain,
for those who do not know how to pray.

We pray for those willing to take courageous stands,
those willing to be Your hands and feet
in the hard work of peace.

We pray for people and for nations:
for those who inflict violence on others,
and for those who suffer
under hatred or oppression.

And we pray for leaders,
that they may find uncommon wisdom
and exceptional grace.

Holy One, Loving One, Incarnate One,
we bring, now, our prayers of thanksgiving and praise,
our cries of joy and gladness,
petition and intercession,
aloud or in the silence of our hearts.

Holy One, Loving One, Incarnate One,
connect us to yourself;
entwine us with each other
and all the world you made;
permeate us with your Spirit,
that we may live as your image,
the Body of Christ. Amen.

CAROL Angels From the Realms of Glory

LESSON 2 – The Visit of The Shepherds

A Voice: In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night.

The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified, but the angel said, "Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a savior has been born to you: he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to all who enjoy God's favor."

Now when the angels had gone from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which God has made known to us."

CAROL Angels We Have Heard on High

A Voice: The shepherds hurried away, and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger.

When they saw the child they repeated what they had been

told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart.

And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; it was exactly as they had been told. (Luke 2: 8-20)

CAROL What Child is This

LESSON 3 – Jesus Presented in the Temple

Women: When the eighth day came and the child was to be circumcised, they gave him the name Jesus, the name the angel had given him before his conception.

And when the day came for them to be purified as laid down by the Law of Moses, they took him up to Jerusalem to present him to God – observing what stands written in God's Law: Every first-born male must be consecrated to God – also to offer in sacrifice, in accordance with what is said in the Law, a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons. (Luke 2: 21-24)

CAROL See the Little Baby

LESSON 4 – The Prophecy of Simeon

Men: Now in Jerusalem there was a man named Simeon. He was an upright and devout man; he had looked forward to Israel's comforting, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death until he had set eyes on the Christ of God. Prompted by the Spirit he came to the Temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the law required, he took him into his arms and blessed God; and he said:

"Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised; because my eyes have seen the salvation which

you have prepared for all the nations to see, a light to enlighten the pagans and the glory of your people Israel."

As the child's father and mother stood there wondering at the things that were being said about him, Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, "You see this child: he is destined for the fall and for the rising of many in Israel, destined to be a sign that is rejected – and a sword will pierce your own soul too – so that the secret thoughts of many may be laid bare." (Luke 2: 25-35)

CAROL O Come All Ye Faithful

OFFERING

The Christmas offering this year will be shared between one individual and a group project. The first portion of our gifts will assist a worker at Potter's House who has been struggling to pay off a large medical bill while raising her own child and two others who have no family members to care for them.

Then, the remainder of our offering will go to the Good Grades program of Hope and a Home. This program provides cash awards to school-age children in Hope and Home families who achieve at least a B average on their report cards or who have the highest averages for their grade level. The children receive half the award in cash, and the other half is placed in a savings account that they receive when they finish high school.

Let us bring, now, our gifts and offerings.

As the offering is gathered,
please join in singing *O Holy Night*

LESSON 5 – The Prophecy of Anna

Women: There was a prophetess also, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was well on in years. Her days of girlhood over, she had been married for seven years before becoming a widow. She was now eighty-four years old and never left the Temple, serving God night and day with fasting and prayer. She came by just at that moment and began to praise God; and she spoke of the child to all who looked forward to the deliverance of Jerusalem.

All: When they had done everything the Law of the Lord required, they went back to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. Meanwhile the child grew to maturity, and he was filled with wisdom; and God's favor was with him. (Luke 2: 36-40)

CAROL Silent Night

BENEDICTION

Go into the world in peace;

have courage; hold onto what is good;

return to no one evil for evil;

strengthen the fainthearted;

support the weak; help the suffering;

love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit,
and the coming of Christ into the world.

Amen.

RECESSIONAL Joy to the World

Genealogy of Mary from the Women's Liturgy Group of New York, as compiled by Ann Patrick Ware, 100 LaSalle St., New York, NY 10027, as reprinted in *Contemplative Participation: Sacrosanctum Concilium Twenty-Five Years Later*, by Mary Collins, O.S.B.[Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990], p31f.

Luke passages from Jerusalem Bible