

Redemption in Contradiction: A Christmas HiNote 2012

A stable and not a palace
A donkey and not a black stallion
A stable and not a warm room at the inn
A manger and not a crib
Straw and not a delicately woven receiving blanket
A town in the desert and not a city at the centre of the empire
A baby and not a David-like Adonis Prince
The child of a girl and a carpenter and God and not the child of the Emperor
A life of enough and not a life of excess
Nurtured in Nazareth and not reared in Rome
Doubly oppressed between High Priest and Emperor and not advantaged by either

Constricted between Rome and Jerusalem
Between empire and religion

Born into simplicity and not into the ruling elite of his society
Raised into an awareness of the truth and not simply acquiescent as his contemporaries
Seeing with the eye of God and not just the eye of humanity

Born utterly weak to subdue every centre of power since then and to this day

So where is your playground and with whom do you prefer to play
The child or the emperor
On the margins or in the palaces
Content with enough or hungering for excess
Honouring the babe born in Bethlehem and raised in Nazareth to free all forever
Or the Prince who is exclusively of this world and for himself and this life only

Born into ordinariness with the extraordinary mission to be God's anointed
This is Jesus, Son of Joseph and Mary,
Son and Anointed of God,
Who makes you and me
Sons and daughters of God

The One to whom Shepherds came and not a guard of honour
And yet to whom even the Magi came.
The one who without power or weapons comes to save us

O wonder - mystery - astonishing mystery
Love with us
Living next door to us
A Trojan horse who comes into our centre
Not to defeat us but to makes us strong
- The Baby that restores Shalom everywhere.
-Selah
Beloved Partners in Mission

My prayer for all of us at All Saints this Christmas 2012 is that we will all have a meaningful Christmas experience. That means that each one of us will **do** something special for another human being – something that you yourself would appreciate and if you received it you would be astonished by the level of generosity that it represents. You have of course heard this all before but Christmas is always about giving.

I want to suggest however that Christmas is more than simply shifting things around. I believe the giving within a relationship of relational value or capital is worth infinitely more. For example the gift of forgiveness is an obvious and considerable value. I would add the gift of unconditional acceptance and the even greater gift of the tempering of our expectations of each other to that list.

All of these are the first rung on a solid staircase which takes us to our true selves or in another picture both are the solid ground upon which the house that withstands all manner of assault is built.

So I am dreaming of a reconciled Christmas season that begins with all of us being reconciled to ourselves first and then those around us and ultimately the world. All that begins with a decision and a commitment to live *reconciliatorily*.

So expect very little from those around you. In fact you take the initiative and set the agenda and the time-frame; you lead the world around you into reconciliation. Remember too that you are responding to a Divine call to be Divine love in a body. You are not called to be Divine technology or a Divine machine, lawnmower or front-end loader. You are called to be Divine love making God's love present and accessible to all around you. Keep words to a minimum. Keep talking to God though about everything and allow yourself to be directed. Expect your own Pentecost. I do not know of anyone who has said yes to the call to be used by God in this way who has not done it in the power of the Holy Spirit.

So right where you are now is where you need to build a bridge to one who you do not understand. While this is a yearlong campaign it is a campaign that will be like a highway being lit up by individuals holding candles in clusters. One small action added to another which will result in a tsunami.

Here are the words from a song from Yentl: "Papa can you hear me". It is so beautiful and moving as it expresses Yentl's emotions. Don't you feel like that often – "Papa can

you hear me" So over these next 12 months use this song as a prayer.

God bless you this Christmas and may the world see Christ in you.

Love

Michael Bridgette and the gang(sters)

PRAYER

Oh God-our heavenly Father.

Oh, God-and my father

who is also in heaven.

May the light of this

Flickering candle

illuminate the night the way

Your spirit illuminates my soul.

Papa, can you hear me?

Papa, can you see me?

Papa can you find me in the night?

Papa are you near me?

Papa, can you hear me?

Papa, can you help me not be frightened?

Looking at the skies I seem to see

A million eyes which ones are yours?

Where are you now that yesterday

Has waved goodbye

And closed its doors?

The night is so much darker;

The wind is so much colder;

The world I see is so much bigger

Now that I'm alone.

Papa, please forgive me.

Try to understand me;

Papa, don't you know I had no choice?

Can you hear me praying,

Anything I'm saying

Even though the night is filled with voices?

I remember everything you taught me

Every book I've ever read...

Can all the words in all the books

Help me to face what lies ahead?

The trees are so much taller

And I feel so much smaller;

The moon is twice as lonely

And the stars are half as bright...

Papa, how I love you. Papa, how I need you.

Papa, how I miss you

Kissing me good night...