

## WELCOME ALL WONDERS! A Christmas Meditation 2020

The Reverend Dr. Anne Gavin Ritchie

*Welcome, all wonders in one sight! Eternity shut in a span,  
Summer in winter, day in night, Heaven in earth, and God in man!  
Great little one, whose all-embracing birth  
Lifts earth to heaven, stoops heaven to earth.*

This beautiful passage from Richard Crashaw's 17<sup>th</sup>-century poem tells us everything we need to know about Christmas.

The traditional term for Christmas is the *Feast of the Incarnation*. As one newer translation puts it, God was "pitching his tent with us."

This is the enfleshment of the divine in a little baby. This baby who would grow up to heal the sick, preach good news to the poor, and confound the self-righteous – of *all* generations.

The whole concept of incarnation is radical, *outrageous*. Why would God even want to *affiliate* with us, never mind *become* one of us? The Scriptures consistently describe God's sorrow over, essentially, God's *unrequited love* for us.

If you listen closely to the words of the Great Thanksgiving, you'll hear it all. God created us, and we began to sin. God sent the prophets, and we ignored them. God sent his Son, and most of us disregarded him, as many do to this day.

BUT... as our Gospel tells us, "to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, or of the flesh, or of the will of man, but of *God*."

*Does this really mean what it says?* That *we*, like *Jesus*, become children of God, just *like* Jesus? Christmas is all about the incarnation of God in Jesus. What if it is just as much about the incarnation of God in *us*?

I'm not surprised we overlook this question. As the great lay theologian Verna Dozier loved to say, "Too often we choose to *worship* Jesus instead of *following* him."

What could it possibly mean if God is born in us? What if we are truly, essentially, sisters and brothers of Jesus?

Well, we'd be *accountable* for this honorable estate. We'd be conscious that every word we utter and every action we take *matters*. That our words and actions either *advance* the kingdom, the reign of our God of love -- or place *obstacles* in its way. In the *holy* way Jesus lived and died and rose again to show us.

*Being* sisters and brothers of Jesus turns out to be an *essential* responsibility. A responsibility that, in the end, binds us *together* and gives us incalculable *joy*.

On this first Sunday of Christmas, while we're singing familiar Christmas carols; while we're enjoying Zoom reunions with family and friends; there is, perhaps, a higher calling:

To *incarnate* the love *we* were created *in* and created to *be*...  
knowing that our brother Christ is *always with us on the way*.

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