



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23

SILENT NIGHT - STANZA 1 & 2

Silent night, holy night!  
All is calm, all is bright.  
Round yon Virgin,  
    Mother and Child,  
Holy infant so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace,  
Sleep in heavenly peace

Silent night, holy night!  
Shepherds quake at the sight.  
Glories stream from heaven afar  
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,  
Christ the Savior is born!  
Christ the Savior is born

— Joseph Mohr, 1792-1849; tr. John F. Young 1820-1885

This beloved Christmas carol has always enchanted and puzzled me. Each verse paints a vivid set of contradictions in reporting the events of that holiest of nights. After beginning with “Silent night,” we find ourselves in the very next breath singing about a newborn baby (verse 1) and a choir of angels singing “Alleluia” to frightened shepherds (verse 2). For me, neither of these verses paints a particularly silent picture! Instead, they invite us into the exhausted bewilderment of a new mom and the terrified confusion of shepherds working the overnight shift.

Perhaps the author of this text, Joseph Mohr, is inviting us to expand our definitions of silence, stillness, and holiness. Somehow, Christ is born to us within the ordinary, world-shifting moments of our lives, quieting the noise within and around us and focusing us on the good news of God’s daily yet hidden incursions into the world God so loves. God shows up even in the quiet dark of night, offering rest for our weary souls and harmony with the whole creation.

Wherever you find yourself on this night, find a moment to be silent. Pay attention to the sounds of bustling, joyful, suffering, chaotic life around you, and trust by faith that God is present in the noises and in the silence, in moments of contradiction and clarity. Because of Jesus, all of it is holy, and this is the sacred mystery at which we marvel in this season.

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