

## OHolyNight12-24-2011

O Holy Night! the stars are brightly shining; it is the night of the dear Savior's birth.

Long lay the world in sin and error pining,

Till he appeared and the soul felt its worth.

A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.

Fall on your knees, o hear the angel voices,

O night divine, o night when Christ was born.

Here we are on this holy night together, again, a night of excitement and joy, a time when we recall the story of the birth of the one who was to become the inspiration for our faith, the one who came to show us the way to live and move and have our being and how to become the very best humans possible. Deep within we know this and so we gather to honor his birth and to remember all that it has meant to us and to our world.

At the time of his appearance his corner of the world was in spiritual and moral turmoil, much as it is now in our corner of the world. Things were amiss and people were searching for a pathway that would comfort and uphold them as they dealt with the challenges of life.

During the brief years of his ministry, those who accepted him as their Messiah, felt a stirring in their souls as he taught them that every person has worth in the eyes of God. He helped them discover the way to walk to gain hope in the future, peace in the present, joy in the everyday things of life and love for their fellow humans. Those four qualities are represented by the candles in

the Advent wreath--qualities that will bring us all to lives of fulfillment, if we choose to incorporate them into our lives.

As we gather with those we hold most dear, we must remember that an amazing thing happened when Jesus entered the world. An event took place that has changed our world forever. Even though we might struggle and fail at life, Jesus taught us that we always have another chance to make things right. We always have time and space to let the voice of the man from Galilee enter our hearts and minds and souls and make us better people.

This holy night, this night divine reminds us of this.

We cannot help but feel again, on this evening, the thrill of hope that can be ours if we manage to put into action what he taught us in the communities in which we live. When we choose to do this, we see the lives we touch changed, along with the way we view life, and we understand better why our faith still has value.

Patience, understanding and forgiveness become ours when we learn to have hope, peace, joy and love. We discover ways to reach out to others leaving harsh judgments behind and discovering what is the very best in those around us. Instead of looking for all that could be wrong, we look for those things that are right.

On this holy night, this night divine, our souls are awakened to the presence of God in our lives and we are stirred by the promise of all it is we can become. We understand, once again, how our world would have been different had there never been a Jesus. We understand how different we can be once we let him into our hearts. Let us all hope that through us, the light of God will so shine that our weary world can once again rejoice in the hope that yonder breaks a new and glorious morn.”

For:

“Truly he has taught us to love one another;  
his law is love and his gospel is peace.

Chains shall he break for the slave is our brother  
and in his name all oppression shall cease.

Sweet hymns of joy in grateful chorus raise we;  
Let all within us praise his holy name.”

Amen