

A Christmas Prayer

Richard A. Rhem
Spring Lake Country Club
Spring Lake, Michigan
December 20, 2009

O God,
Mystery beyond us,
Mystery within us,
Sacred presence enveloping our lives
in all that is good and true and beautiful,
we are gathered here in this lovely setting
with such depth and warmth of feeling,
gathered with those with whom on so many Christmases past
we have celebrated this High Holy Season,
celebrated God in human flesh,
celebrated the vulnerability of a child
as the only true security.

Ah, dear God,
as we move toward that Holy Night
we sense it once again.
Our deepest intuitions
our highest aspirations,
persuade us again against all doubt, disappointment, cynicism and fear
that the Story is true.
The fairy tale goes to the heart
of what is truly human, truly divine –
love and joy and peace,
the light that scatters the darkness,
a vision of an alternative world
that can find expression in nothing less than
a choir of angels singing,
“Glory to God in the Highest and on earth peace.”

Once a year this annual festival
calls us to stop, to reflect,
to penetrate the mists of our muddled thinking,
so caught up with matters of penultimate concern,
to see what is truly ultimate, what matters ultimately,
what is finally true –
that vulnerability invites trust,
humility invites embrace,

love begets love.

Not Rome in all its glory
but from the least of the tribes of Judah, from Bethlehem,
the birth of a child signaled another way.

A child was born whose ways and words would lift
the veil of mystery from your face
and provide us a window into your very heart –
the heart of the Eternal, pure love,
the heart of the Eternal, full of grace,
a heart that spawned creation's wonder,
a heart that would not abandon nor ever let go
of a world gone awry.

A child was born
and in his warm flesh, you touched us.
In his words, you spoke to us,
In his life, you showed us the way.
The poet glimpsed your way –
*They all were looking for a King
to slay their foes and lift them high;
Thou cam'st, a little baby thing,
that made a woman cry.*

You are with us in weakness rather than power.
How strange that is,
unsettling, unsatisfying,
until we come to realize that
only thus are you with us with our freedom intact;
only thus can our humanity in your image be real.

We come now, to this table.
Spirit of God,
Make for us this bread, the body, the reality of Christ;
Make for us this cup, the blood, the life of Christ.
In our eating and drinking
Let us know that, in the end,
we have nothing to fear.
In His dying words –
Into Your hands we commend our spirits.
Amen.