

# Christmas Day Reflection

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I spent most of the season of Advent this year reflecting on the biblical character Mary, the Mother of Jesus. The hope was to reclaim her from both ancient church dogma and from her storybook image portrayed in Christmas pageants.

What we know about Mary comes primarily from the gospels of Matthew and Luke. And there are a few mentions of her when Jesus is an adult in the Gospel of John. We know the birth narratives as the Christmas Story and see it portrayed in those Christmas pageants. But last night at our Christmas Eve service I moved to a different biblical source to focus on the meaning of Christmas.

I find a deeper spiritual connection with the meaning of Christmas in the opening verses of the Gospel of John. Using spiritual and even mystical poetry, he states:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory... full of grace and truth.*

**There is perhaps no greater imagery to reflect the understanding of God's Sacred Presence beyond us, with us, and within us than that of Light shining in dark places.**

Those dark places are certainly present in the world today as expressed through fear, ignorance, racism, talk of nuclear expansion, disregard of the environment, poverty, and rejection of the 'other'.

The hope we acknowledge at Christmas is that the darkness of will not overcome the Light of Christ. But let us be honest with ourselves, **sometimes those places of darkness dwell within ourselves.** Recognizing that darkness is an important step to finding acceptance of ourselves, as well as healing and wholeness for our own hearts and minds.

Yet there is even more good news. **We understand the birth of Jesus as Emmanuel – God-with-us.** The Word that was present at Creation itself was made flesh in the person of Jesus, the Light of the World. That means that instead of envisioning God only as "out there" and "other," we can now experience God right here with us!

The astonishing fact is **that same Light of Christ dwells within each one of us. That means that during times of personal darkness, you and I can cling to the promise of that Sacred Light overcoming the darkness within ourselves.**

So the next time we sing or hear *Joy to the World*, expand that meaning to also include Joy to You and Me. And don't forget to let that Light within you shine before others. This is cause to rejoice, indeed.

Amen.