

**Christmas Eve 2021**

**Rev Sharon**

**The word becomes in-fleshed in us**

We come on Christmas Eve to place ourselves in a story. A story that gives us hope.

We remember the birthing of a baby into time, into a specific time.

We recall Mary and Joseph and a census by Quirinius governor of Syria (one of the most quoted governors in all of first century).

We think of shepherds, a particular group of shepherds who saw apparitions in the sky and something stirred within them that there was a new thing being birthed in their time.

Tonight, we have read this story from a different angle.

We have read of the birthing of light from darkness,

we have read of the word spoken into silence – we have read of a beginning.

Perhaps the very beginning of time - of the birthing of all creation.

**This** Christmas story is not located in time, it is **over time**, it is about **all time**.

It is about the Genesis of earth/the cosmos/multiple universes,

It is about the bulb that is about to burst open,

The whale that calves in the spring,

and it is about your birth, my birth

and it is about every day as a creative moment.

**Word becoming flesh.**

The mystery of what is invisible (what is pulsing in the universes, at the heart of all life, the source of all being) becoming visible.

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Friends this is **within** and **beyond** the Christian story.

As we look at the history of Christianity – there have been so many atrocities in how this religion has oppressed people, when it encounters cultures that are different from its own.

I grieve the past deeply.

The best of Christianity is when it celebrates the beauty of God visible in the other.

An example of this is in the Celtic legend of the Christmas Tree.

Scholar Alexander Shaia notes that when Christianity interacted with the Celtic world, new ways of celebrating the mystery of Christ were discovered.

During the week prior and following the Winter Solstice (our December 21<sup>st</sup>), the celts would decorate a sacred tree.

Some say, there was one oak tree which was the sacred tree of the village. And the reason that the oak tree was the sacred tree was because their belief was that they were able to harness fire because the oak draws lightning and it would strike the tree and a branch would burn, and they would break the burning branch from the tree. And they would acquire fire – for light, for warmth, for energy.

So on this day before the winter solstice, because they saw a fire as a compliment to the radiance of the sun. They wanted to honor the tree that gave them fire as they prayed that the sun would come back to them on this their darkest night.

And they would decorate the tree by placing on it dried apples and pears and fruits from harvest. And they would celebrate the oak tree in its barrenness on this day because in its barrenness they knew that it was starting the new cycle of growth.

Well, Christianity comes and it sees this ritual  
and **in it** they see the beauty of the Word becoming flesh,  
the birth of the Christ.

Born into barren places and resurrecting new life, from darkness - light.  
From a winter Oak tree – fire.

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During dark times, physical darkness, emotional darkness, spiritual darkness – we may idolize light and demonize darkness. Our culture tends to set up this dichotomy.

Yet friends, wisdom tells that in the Holy Dark – radiance comes forth.

Both light and dark have everything in them that we need – they can be beneficial and destructive. Too much light is damaging, too much darkness also.

Entering the dark, is like entering a womb – it is a place of possibility.

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**Tonight's Christmas Story invites you and I to live the questions of our time with the hope that our living will be this Word in-fleshed.**

- How can we, you and I, navigate these increasingly uncertain times?

I don't believe that God has a pre-worked out plan for our individual lives.  
Rather, daily, we are invited to join in the flow of God.

To flesh out God's love, God's justice, God's kindness, God's forgiveness.

**For as St Teresa of Avila said:**

Christ Has No Body Now But Yours  
No Hands, No Feet On Earth But Yours  
Yours Are The Eyes that Look Compassion On the World  
Yours Are The Feet that Walk To Do Good  
Yours Are The Hands that Bless All The World

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- How can we open our hands and eyes to the next uncertain day?

**It is in living that we discover:**

**in our darkest night,  
God kindles a fire that never dies away.**

**We walk not by sight, but by a deep trust in this story of God.**

**The word becoming flesh in and among us,  
Amen.**