

Christmas I

“Do not be afraid, the angel said; for see, I am bringing good news of great joy for all the people.”

Have y'all noticed the moon over the past few nights? Stunning. It is as if the grand mystery, the very significance of the universe is right there reflected upon this ancient and lonely moon. There is something so very alluring to me about the night sky. At this time of the year, especially...At the winter solstice, there is more night sky than at any other time of the year. But it is not all that often that we can see it in its fullness, because the lights of cities increasingly obscure the view....so I don't think we do much sky watching any more. But there are those rare occasions when we find ourselves away....away in a deserted place...away in a lost corner of our world....away in the dark...and the night sky presses upon us in all of its pendulous mystery, its luminous glory.... The stars ablaze on myriad paths...paths known only to God's mythy mind and imagination...the stars come nearer it seems when we are away in the dark....an occasional asteroid, skittering on the periphery of our vision, burning up in a flash in the outer atmosphere; the lighted river of metal and gas, that we call the Milky Way, wheeling to a rhythm that orders the universe entire.....matter and energy at one with another; physicists now tell us as much...light and dark both alike.

Humankind throughout its history has always known that the secret of who we are, where we come from, what life is like, what the truth of our existence is, can be apprehended, read, as it were, in the night sky....the secret of the universe embedded in the hieroglyphics, the runes, the artistry hid in the heavens.... Urgent news carried by light from the source of creation. And tonight in a dark corner of the world, in a barn somewhere in the forgotten Judean hill country, a child of the same substance as the stars themselves is born....the glorious essence of the universe manifest before our very eyes....and the night sky is filled with praise, and for good reason.

This birth, dear people of God, is not just a revelation of who God is, come among us in human form....but this is a revelation from God as to who we are...who we are, made in God's image...at this birth we apprehend the profound and audacious truth that at the birth of the Christ, we are born the Christ...the anointed ones who go into the dark corners of our world bearing the marks of this birth. The marks: vulnerability; the marks of compassion and kindness and mercy and justice and peace...these are the marks of the Christ that we bear into a dark world; these are the marks written in the heavens in the beginning...the very DNA of the universe encoded with urgent news, news of the Source: And that news is that **goodness** will order the stars; that love will enlighten the darkness; that this light born in the

beginning will never be quenched....never... And this light is ours to carry...we too born in the beginning....we too the substance of Stars.

In an old collect of the Christmas liturgy we say, “O God you make us glad by the yearly festival of the birth of your only son Jesus Christ.” But I want to say that God has many sons and daughters, and we and all people of faith are they. In his birth and in the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, we are given our true identity. The search for the self is over: We know now who we are: That we live for love, not hate; that we live for justice, not oppression; that we live to forgive, not to avenge; we show mercy not malice; we give sacrificially; never withholding. We prepare a lovely banquet of abundance to which all are invited and welcome. This is who we are, our true nature...like our brother before us, and among us, born for the world’s sake this night...We, God’s progeny, are of the stars, sons and daughters of the great mystery....we are sons and daughters of God’s most beautiful and gracious order....Be not afraid....Be not afraid. This is Good News indeed my friends....good news that comes in all urgency... So look skyward because all the angels of the night sky are singing of our birth. Singing of a stunning reality, as stunning as the luminous moon above....singing in the exquisite night sky since before time was

begotten....singing of a most happy birth....singing in the mysterious and
luminous night sky:...Gloria in excelsis Deo.