

A Reflection for Christmas 2018
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*Sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth.*
-Psalm 96:1

Our home has been the gathering place for most family holiday celebrations for over 30 years, and this Christmas is no exception. One measure of the time passing is how music has been a part of the day. The technology has evolved from stacks of vinyl records, through cassette tapes, to CDs, and now to playlists on any number of devices that compete for the nearby speaker. Compiling the playlist has become part of my personal Christmas preparation tradition, one that I particularly enjoy because of the wealth of meaning and memory in the music of Christmas.

This year I sent out a request to everyone who will be with us on Christmas Day to let me know some of their Christmas carols so that their hearts and minds are tended to. As the music of the day can run the gamut from sublime to banal, I used the phrases “Christmas *carol*,” rather than “Christmas song,” deliberately.

Of the responses that have come in to my request, the overwhelming choice is “Silent Night.” Given the differences in many of the belief practices of those coming for Christmas, I was pleasantly surprised at how much the carol meant to so many. While I can’t speak for the others, I find new meaning in the words and music when I hear this song this year. It has as much to do with the season of Advent as it does with Christmas.

In Advent, we waited. Hopefully, our time was not spent in the busy-ness of the sights and sounds of only preparing for Christmas. Hopefully, we had time of true quiet, of sitting, and being. Hopefully, our senses were aware of what we longed for interiorly. Full of hope, we entered the quiet. We waited for not only a season that would satisfy the senses, but for a realized hope, a season of true fullness. The fullness of that quiet waiting begins with the silence that is captured in the Christmas carol. The child born, the Word become human, is the fullness of creation. It is fitting that we attend this in silence.

And yet we also are compelled to give voice to what we witness, and so we sing. “Silent Night” gives way to “Hark the Herald Angels Sing,” and all the other songs

which give voice and melody to the mysteries we celebrate, even though we cannot comprehend them.

God created us with senses, and that's how we come to know God. But there is more: the sights, aromas, touches, tastes, and sounds of Christmas are shared with us by our Creator who experiences those senses in the Word of God that took on our humanity. Christmas draws us to the Incarnation; it becomes a door through which we can see what God has intended for us from the beginning.

Merry Christmas!