

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us...”

(John 1:14a)

Some Poetry for

The First Sunday After Christmas 1 January 2017

The Risk of Birth

By Madeleine L'Engle

(Read by Nancy Harrington)

This is no time for a child to be born,
With the earth betrayed by war & hate
And a comet slashing the sky to warn
That time runs out & the sun burns late.

That was no time for a child to be born,
In a land in the crushing grip of Rome;
Honour & truth were trampled by scorn --
Yet here did the Saviour make his home.

When is the time for love to be born?
The inn is full on the planet earth,
And by a comet the sky is torn --
Yet Love still takes the risk of birth.

Sure on this Shining Night

By James Agee

(Read by Lois Olesen)

[A setting of this poem by composer Morten Lauridsen was sung by the St. Paul's Choir during the Choral Prelude on Christmas Eve just past.]

Sure on this shining night
Of star made shadows round,
Kindness must watch for me
This side the ground.
The late year lies down the north.
All is healed, all is health.
High summer holds the earth.
Hearts all whole.
Sure on this shining night I weep for wonder wand'ring far
alone
Of shadows on the stars.

The House of Christmas

(first and final stanzas)

By G. K. Chesterton

(Read by Bob Knowlton)

There fared a mother driven forth
Out of an inn to roam;
In the place where she was homeless
All men are at home.
The crazy stable close at hand,
With shaking timber and shifting sand,
Grew a stronger thing to abide and stand
Than the square stones of Rome.

To an open house in the evening
Home shall men come,
To an older place than Eden
And a taller town than Rome.
To the end of the way of the wandering star,
To the things that cannot be and are,
To the place where God was homeless
And all men are at home.

Christmas Mail

By Ted Koozer

(Read by Helen Stowe)

Cards in each mailbox,
angels, manger, star and lamb,
as the rural carrier,
driving the snowy roads,
hears from her bundles
the plaintive bleating of sheep,
the shuffle of sandals,
the clapping of camels.
At stop after stop,
she opens the little tin door
and places deep in the shadows
the shepherd and the wisemen,
the donkeys lank and weary,
the cow who chews and muses.
And from her styrofoam cup,
white as a star and perched
on the dashboard, leading her
ever into the distance,
there is a hint of hazelnut,
and then a touch of myrrh.

For the Time Being: A Christmas Oratorio

[“Shepherds: 43”]

By W. H. Auden

(Read by Anne Leone)

Let us run to learn
How to love and run;
Let us run to Love.

Advent Credo

By Alan Boesak

(Read by David Baxter & Dee Anne Dodd)

It is not true that creation and the human family are doomed to destruction and loss --
This is true: For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that
whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.

It is not true that we must accept inhumanity and discrimination, hunger and poverty,
death and destruction --
This is true: I have come that they may have life, and that abundantly.

It is not true that violence and hatred should have the last word, and that war and
destruction rule forever --
This is true: Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government shall be
upon his shoulder, his name shall be called a wonderful councilor, mighty God,
the Everlasting, the Prince of Peace.

It is not true that we are simply victims of the powers of evil who seek to rule this world
--
This is true: To me is given authority in heaven and on earth, and lo I am with you, even
until the end of the world.

It is not true that we have to wait for those who are specially gifted, who are prophets of
the Church before we can be peacemakers --
This is true: I will pour out my spirit on all flesh and your sons and daughters shall
prophesy, your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams.

It is not true that our hopes for liberation of humankind, of justice, of human dignity, of
peace, are not meant for this earth and for this history --
This is true: The hour comes, and it is now, that the true worshippers shall worship God
in spirit and in truth.

So let us enter Advent in hope, even hope against hope. Let us see visions of love and
peace and justice.

Let us affirm with humility, with joy, with faith, with courage: Jesus Christ -- the life of
the world.