

Christmas 2018

Sing to the Lord a new song, sing praise to the Lord with melodious harp

A new song has come upon us. Let us sing it all the day long - our whole life long

"Sing to the Lord a new song." So what's the old song? The old song sings about - power - eye-for-eye - hate your enemies - disregard the vulnerable no matter what they look like - where they come from - how they talk - what they believe. The new song sings about forgiveness - compassion - reconciliation - trust and love. The old song sings about a God of law and order - intolerant and unforgiving. The new song sings about a God of reconciling and of healing. The old sings about a fear-based religion. The new song sings about a religion of trust and love. Let's stick with the new song of trust, compassion and reconciliation

I remember of a woman years ago who longed to sing the new song. She didn't have a tree for Christmas. She was very upset about this. She kept saying "*I want a tree*" even though it was late Christmas eve. So someone went out and got her a tree. It wasn't a tree she wanted, she wanted to sing its song of loving and healing.

My memories of Christmas are of the new song. Dad was our Santa Claus. It was his job to hand out the gifts from the tree to the rest of us. He loved doing that. Such a wonderful memory. Our family was singing the new song.

I have this special memory of my sister at Christmas. She had been practicing in a school play in which the kids would sing. One night, we all heard this little girl voice singing. It was the school play song, and it was my sister singing this song in her sleep. It was so lovely - this little girl-voice so sweet, so pure. She was singing a new song:

*Away in a manger no crib for his bed,
The little Lord Jesus lay down his sweet head.
The stars in the heavens look down where he lay,
The little Lord Jesus asleep in the hay.*

We all sing the new song when we give to others from the heart. When the heart is in it, Christ is in Christmas.

One of my Jesuit brother's, Gary Smith, has worked his whole life among the vulnerable and the homeless, both in Tacoma and Portland. He kept a journal of his experiences called, "Street Journal". I would like to read one of his entries.

"Thursday, November 16, 1989. I awoke to National Public Radio this morning with the news that six Jesuits and two of their collaborators were murdered in El Salvador last night. All were connected with the University of Central America in San Salvador, all working in the turbulent world of social justice and the rights of the poor. They were the intellectual heart of the Salvadoran church, and leaders for a change and reform in the tortured world of Central America. This news - this heart-breaking news - has simply frozen me all day.

"At mass later on, a Jesuit novice, Terry, who has been working with us for a few months, broke down and wept uncontrollably. Roland, a dark eyed, black bearded guest who comes every Thursday morning for this service, was seated next to Terry on the rug, and he reached over and took the Jesuit into his arms. They did not know each other, but Rollin, no stranger to suffering in his young life, spontaneously made his move toward Terry with the sensitivity and compassion born of an individual who knew pain. It did not end with Terry either, for later on he consoled some of the rest of us who were struggling with the grief of it all. It was as if Roland was breaking off a piece of himself and sharing that self with those in need. He was really the celebrant of the Eucharist this morning. He was the Christ walking the streets, comforting the comforters."

The Christ of Christmas is born in every baby - child - teen - adult - woman - man - senior - Christian - non Christian who loves and longs to be loved. That's the new song. Let's sing this new song together. You all have good voices; I like it when you sing with me . . .

Away in a manger...

May your day be filled with a new song as you share family meals,
share gifts, and watch football.

Merry Christmas, Everyone!