

Christmas Eve Reflection
December 24, 2020
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I awoke on Christmas Eve 1994 early in the morning to go up to the barn to milk my cow at the Monastery where I was staying at the time and working. Peregrina was the cow's name because she was born in transit or peregrinating from Pennsylvania to Connecticut. It was dark that morning and there had been a storm overnight which was still blowing pretty intensely outside. Bleary-eyed, I got dressed and stepped out of my room into the hall and was blinded by two brilliant lights shining through the window. Given it was early Christmas Eve, I have to admit one of my first thoughts was "angels"? It was so disorienting, as I cautiously walked down the hallway shielding my eyes and opened the door against the strong wind. Outside in the driveway was my own car and the Monastery truck parked side by side as I had left them the previous night with an 80 foot pine tree that had been torn down in the storm laying across both cars crushing them into the ground. Somehow it had jammed the high beams of the truck on and that's what had been shining into the house.

The storm had been a violent one and there were a number of pine trees on the Monastery's property that had come down during the night, but somehow that massive pine tree across my cars felt personal, like some kind of message on Christmas Eve of that year. It turns out there was a nun who had been in the process of dying that same night after a long battle with illness but before she died she made up a memorial card for herself with an image on the front and a poem on the back that she asked the sisters to offer to people upon her death. And on the front of the card was the image of a full moon and two pine trees. I

didn't know what it meant. I still don't know what it meant but somehow in all of it I felt addressed, spoken to and it wasn't a threat as you might think but it left this sense of wonderment in my own small finiteness amidst creation's drama on Christmas Eve. Again, I can't tell you what was meant, but that I felt like I had been addressed, was sure.

In Hebrew the term "dabar" means both "word" and "deed", so to SAY something is to DO something, putting words to voice and breath and uttering whatever lies hidden in here brings something to be in the world. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, God speaks worlds into being. God says "let there be light" and where before there had only been darkness, there was light. If we speak the words "I love you" into a silence where before there were no words, something is created that wasn't there before. "In a sense," the writer Frederick Buechner says, "I do not love you first and then speak it, but only by speaking the words 'I love you' do I give it reality." In the beginning of all beginnings, God spoke and it was so and through the eons of time, across the billions of years of evolving existence, God continues to speak what is not into being.

But there came a time when a different sort of word had to be spoken over the course of the strain and stress of human history, a more definitive address was needed and given not just to anyone, but a word given to someone who would hear it and receive it and nurture it in the soft, dark, rich, womb of her body. And so there was chosen a little-noticed poor young woman somewhere in an unknown place in the middle east through whom the word could be spoken. It was said that an angel presence, a light winged ephemeral pulse of divine energy asked if she was willing and the young woman, Mary, spoke in return a "yes" so pure and deep that in that moment what was said became what was done and

the word that became Jesus was conceived in her womb and through him humanity was addressed, by the Creator of the universe unlike ever before or ever since.

And we heard things in ways we had never heard before,
about our not needing to fear, though life can be so fearful,
about our being loved, though we can feel so unworthy of love at times,
about a promised end in fulfillment and joy, though things so often
seem to be spiraling towards violence and chaos...

that it's all, no matter how it may seem, being held in the unseen
arms of One who loves us,

At Christmas we celebrate that we are lovingly addressed by the Creator of Worlds, of the moon and sun, planets and stars of distant galaxies whose light reaches us from billions of years ago. We are addressed by THIS God who came in the form of a vulnerable gurgling little baby human boy to draw out of us not fear or awe but love, tenderness, care, hope – that's how we are addressed by God on Christmas. We don't need to necessarily understand it all or grasp it with our heads, we only need to allow ourselves to receive the word spoken into our hearts, cherish it and nurture it as Mary did, and who knows then what will be conceived in us as a result, what then will be spoken through our lives, as the word in flesh appearing.. o come, let us adore him, o come let us adore him, Christ, the Lord.