



# Arise

A reflection / letter to foster pastoral and spiritual growth

By Bob Traupman / priest / writer

Vol. XXI / No. 4 / December 2009

---

## One Starry Night

---

**A very, very long time ago**, in the beginning, there was night. Only night. Darkness covered the abyss. And there was an all-absorbing silence. No song to be heard, no music; a Word to be spoken, but no world to be spoken to.

Then God spoke and shattered the silence.

**"Let there be light,"** God said. And there was light. Light to shine in the darkness. There were stars and suns and moons.

And then God created humans so there would be some to enjoy the light and to dance in the darkness. And some to listen to his Word penetrating the silence from end to end.

But humans brought a clatter into the silence -- an unholy dissonance. Cain killed Abel and that dissonance screamed to heaven. And humans ever since have been preferring dissonance to the language of silence in which God speaks.

Not only was there dissonance but a new kind of night -- the night of fellow-humans' cruelty toward one another and their failure to acknowledge the true **Light** that so longed to enter the world.

There were some, of course, who knew the language of silence. And they **longed** for a new Word to be spoken. A Word that would also be a Light shining in the terrible darkness that humans had perpetrated on one another.



But then, one starry night,  
nearly two millennia ago. . .

**". . . When all things  
were in quiet silence,  
and the night was in the midst  
of her course,  
Your almighty Word  
leapt down from heaven,  
from your royal throne, O God."  
(Roman liturgy)**

The most beautiful song the world had ever heard emerged from the silence of that holy night, the song of the angels, the song of the stars. God spoke directly to the hearts of people of this planet. God sent to them *the Word*, spoken for all time, the Word who was God's only Son, *Jesus*, who would be our Shepherd and Redeemer. God had spoken this loving Word in the beginning, but people of this planet were not ready to hear it, not ready to accept.

And yet, on a tiny planet of an insignificant sun in an insignificant universe among universes, God sent his only Son to interact with the people of this planet, the human race.

And not only to interact with us, that Son, born of a woman, became one of us and with us.

God the Creator and Sustainer of the universe honored us with . . .  
**. . . an up close and personal relationship.**

And he is still doing this! He still is eager to know us and love us. And be known and loved by us!

This story has been *handed down* from generation to generation. (*That's what the word "tradition" means – to hand down.* **In the act of handing down the story we become who we are as a Christian people. We strengthen our faith.**

Each year, I hope there is something new in meaning for you and for me. The story that God has become a human person like us and with us is still awesome news. Even if you do not share our faith in this story and *trust in it* as also the story of *your* life, it still has power to transform as the stories of Homer or Dante or Shakespeare. There is meaning here. But I, for one, have chosen to make the story of Jesus and Mary *my own story*. The meaning of my life is found therein.

What an awesome story that the God of the universe would become present in a baby! In a manger yet! Why would God want to become so vulnerable? *Think about that.*

And the Christmas story is an all too human story. There is intrigue, hardship, violence, terrorism. Luke tells the story that Jesus was homeless the night he was born. The child Jesus was also a political refugee.

### **What's the meaning of this story?**

God sent his only Son to honor us / to embrace us / to lift us up / help us realize our greatness / our glory as a human race, by choosing to love rather than hate. He came to show us how God likes and appreciates *and enjoys the company of* his human friends. Jesus became human so that human beings could become like God. *Even if you just consider this as story it's still pretty awesome, isn't it? It would be wonderful if it were true, wouldn't it?*

**But this is our Christian faith** – our Credo: **that Jesus is truly God and truly human.**

He died as a human too, and as a human, was raised from the dead. He assures us of a place in God's kingdom where he rules forever and ever.

I believe powerfully in the meaning of this story. The older I get, the deeper I seem to plumb its depths. The story is so *huge* and has so many levels that we will never exhaust its meaning. There will always be something *more* for us, if only we would seek.

Christmas comes in the middle of life's swirl, in the midst of hardship and doubt. It comes for the poor and the suffering all over the world – and for us if we recognize our spiritual poverty and need.

**Not so starry nights.** That one starry night, two millennia ago, taught us an important lesson. The darkness of despair and guilt that we humans create for ourselves is not actually dark. Night no longer is only night. Sometimes, the most beautiful stars can illumine the darkest night. And night is followed by day. Most of all, each of us can learn that the darkness that seems to penetrate our souls can be illumined by the light of Jesus, who is *the* Light. It is precisely **because of** darkness -- particularly the kind of darkness we humans perpetrate -- that Jesus was born.



*The people who walked in darkness  
Have seen a great light;  
Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom  
a light has shone.  
You have brought them abundant joy  
and great rejoicing.  
(Is 9:1-6 / Christmas Midnight Mass)*

The church in proclaiming Isaiah of old, is talking about the **illumination** that comes with faith. We are called by the present darkness in our world and gloom in our hearts to muster our faith, our hope and our love, that is, to really and truly be -- a Christian *in the face of darkness and evil*. We are called to hang on and hang in.

St. John states in the prologue of his Gospel:

*The light shines on in the darkness,  
a darkness that did not overcome it. . . .  
The real light which gives light  
to every [person] was coming into the world . . .*

John is talking about a powerful spiritual light that can irradiate the world with a wonderful energy more powerful than electricity or a nuclear bomb. That light can penetrate any darkness, even the darkness of spiritual evil. Since we are associated with that light, no darkness, however terrifying, can overcome us.

Light will come into the darkest corners of our hearts and of the world. This story has power because for two thousand years people have believed in it and passed the story down from generation to generation.

I have also learned that starry nights are filled **silent nights**. We can learn the **mystery** of *silence*. We can learn, perhaps for the first time, that silence is the language in which God speaks heart to heart, and soul-to-soul. Silence draws us out of ourselves and connects us with God and the universe. Silence is the music of the spheres. In entering into silence, we connect with all there is.

Before radio or TV there was mostly silence in our world. There was only *live* music. But silence can hardly be *heard* these days. Many of us are scared of what we might *hear* in the silence. Some of us are even afraid to sleep in silence. We *need* noise. Even in some of our liturgies, there is no space for silence.

And what does God say to us in the silence? Please *get the meaning of Christmas as you celebrate it this year*: This celebration of that holy, two millennia following that great starry night, God still makes it clear for all time that he wants to be **up close and personal** in human history and, if we would let God, in your heart and mine.

*The Word became flesh  
and made his dwelling among us,  
and we have seen his glory:  
the glory of an only Son coming from the Father,  
filled with enduring love. (John 1:1-18)*

**A** great star was the centerpiece of that starry night two millennia ago. There were some in that day who had enough courage and inner confidence to follow that star. They risked all and followed. Night is like that. Night is not always to be feared. Sometimes, the gloom of our lives is pierced by a light of understanding, the light of genuine hope. We have to be ready to follow. And to recognize that Light for what it truly is for us. The Magi *knew* what they were looking for. They *knew* their light had come. *And they were ready to follow.*



**Don't be afraid of the silence**, dear friends. For **Someone**, sooner or later, will speak your name in the silence.

And **don't be afraid of the darkness**, brothers and sisters, for in the darkness, sooner or later, your **Light** will come.

---

© Copyright 2009. Bob Traupman. All rights reserved.  
2999 NW 48th Avenue / Lauderdale Lakes, FL 33313 /  
954-533-4478 / arise7@me.com / spirit7.com

**Check out my blog with more of my writings at:**  
[www.bobtraupman.wordpress.com](http://www.bobtraupman.wordpress.com)

Be sure to tell this story to your children and your grandchildren. Let them know its charm, its power and its beauty. But not only tell it – *live it! Every day!*

It is when we hand on the faith, when we *share* it, that our own faith is strengthened.

Be not cynical, my friends.

So I invite you to muster your faith in this story. Or perhaps to *try it on for size* for the first time. Christmas is for everyone, especially the poor, the poor in spirit. The arrogant, the cynical, the wrong-doer will have difficulty with it.

Muster your faith -- no matter how difficult it is to believe. Grab hold of whatever level of faith that you have.

Open your hearts -- despite what darkness is there.

Let in the light!

Muster your faith!

Enliven your hope!

Share your love,

And most of all *receive* the gift of love / in the person of the one we call Jesus.

Your light will come, Jerusalem.

Your light will come, dear people of God.

This day the Lord will dawn on you  
in radiant beauty.

+++++

++++