

“... without the incarnation, Christianity isn't even a very good story, and most sadly, it means nothing. "Be nice to one another" is not a message that can give my life meaning, assure me of love beyond brokenness, and break open the dark doors of death with the key of hope. The incarnation is an essential part of Jesus-shaped spirituality.”

– **Michael Spencer, Mere Churchianity: Finding Your Way Back to Jesus-Shaped Spirituality**

“Christ took upon himself this human form of ours. He became Man even as we are men. In his humanity and his lowliness we recognize our own form. He has become like a man, so that men should be like him. And in the Incarnation the whole human race recovers the dignity of the image of God. Henceforth, any attack on the least of men is an attack on Christ, who took the form of man, and in his own Person restored the image of God in all that bears a human form. Through fellowship and communion with the incarnate Lord, we recover our true humanity, and at the same time we are delivered from that individualism which is the consequence of sin, and retrieve our solidarity with the whole human race. By being partakers of Christ incarnate, we are partakers in the whole humanity which he bore. We now know that we have been taken up and borne in the humanity of Jesus, and therefore that new nature we now enjoy means that we too must bear the sins and sorrows of others. The incarnate Lord makes his followers the brothers of all mankind. The “philanthropy” of God (Titus 3:4) revealed in the Incarnation is the ground of Christian love towards all on earth that bears the name of man. The form of Christ incarnate makes the Church into the Body of Christ. All the sorrows of mankind fall upon that form, and only through that form can they be borne.”

– **Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship**

“God travels wonderful ways with human beings, but he does not comply with the views and opinions of people. God does not go the way that people want to prescribe for him; rather, his way is beyond all comprehension, free and self-determined beyond all proof. Where reason is indignant, where our nature rebels, where our piety anxiously keeps us away: that is precisely where God loves to be. There he confounds the reason of the reasonable; there he aggravates our nature, our piety—that is where he wants to be, and no one can keep him from it. Only the humble believe him and rejoice that God is so free and so marvelous that he does wonders where people despair, that he takes what is little and lowly and makes it marvelous. And that is the wonder of all wonders, that God loves the lowly.... God is not ashamed of the lowliness of human beings. God marches right in. He chooses people as his instruments and performs his wonders where one would least expect them. God is near to lowliness; he loves the lost, the neglected, the unseemly, the excluded, the weak and broken.”

– **Dietrich Bonhoeffer, God Is in the Manger: Reflections on Advent and Christmas**

“God in Christ has taken into Himself the brokenness of the human condition. Hence, human woundedness, brokenness, death itself are transformed from dead ends to doorways into Life. In the divinizing humanity of Christ, bruises become balm.”

– **Martin Laird, Into the Silent Land: A Guide to the Christian Practice of Contemplation**

“The Incarnation is the ultimate reason why the service of God cannot be divorced from the service of man.”

– **Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship**

“When spirituality becomes spiritualization, life in the body becomes carnality. When ministers and priests live their ministry mostly in their heads and relate to the Gospel as a set of valuable ideas to be announced, the body quickly takes revenge by screaming loudly for affection and intimacy. Christian leaders are called to live the Incarnation, that is, to live in the body, not only in their own bodies but also in the corporate body of the community, and to discover there the presence of the Holy Spirit.”

– **Henri J.M. Nouwen, In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership**

“The incarnation took all that properly belongs to our humanity and delivered it back to us, redeemed. All of our inclinations and appetites and capacities and yearnings are purified and gathered up and glorified by Christ. He did not come to thin out human life; He came to set it free. All the dancing and feasting and processing and singing and building and sculpting and baking and merrymaking that belong to us, and that were stolen away into the service of false gods, are returned to us in the gospel.”

– **Thomas Howard**

We have tested and tasted too much, lover-  
Through a chink too wide there comes in no wonder.  
But here in the Advent-darkened room  
Where the dry black bread and the sugarless tea  
Of penance will charm back the luxury  
Of a child's soul, we'll return to Doom  
The knowledge we stole but could not use.

And the newness that was in every stale thing  
When we looked at it as children: the spirit-shocking  
Wonder in a black slanting Ulster hill  
Or the prophetic astonishment in the tedious talking  
Of an old fool will awake for us and bring  
You and me to the yard gate to watch the wins  
And the bog-holes, cart-tracks, old stables where Time begins.

O after Christmas we'll have no need to go searching  
For the difference that sets an old phrase burning-  
We'll hear it in the whispered argument of a churning  
Or in the streets where the village boys are lurching.  
And we'll hear it among decent men too  
Who barrow dung in gardens under trees,  
Wherever life pours ordinary plenty.  
Won't we be rich, my love and I, and  
God we shall not ask for reason's payment,  
The why of heart-breaking strangeness in dreeping hedges  
Nor analyse God's breath in common statement.  
We have thrown into the dust-bin the clay-minted wages  
Of pleasure, knowledge and the conscious hour-  
And Christ comes with a January flower.

Patrick Kavanagh

### The candle of HOPE

Hope for the hopeless and hope for the lost.  
No matter the price, whatever the cost.  
Jesus has come and was willing to pay  
being born as a babe that first Christmas day.

Hope that's a certainty, hope that is sure.  
Though the earth is shaken we are secure.  
Trusting in Jesus and safe in His care.  
Knowing that He's with us and always there.

### The candle of PEACE

Peace, all other peace transcending  
Peace so eternal and unending.  
Peace that passes all understanding  
Peace so perfect and undemanding

Peace lovely peace floods into our soul  
Peace of healing making us whole  
Peace from God, peace from heaven.  
Peace, Jesus whispers deep within.

### The candle of JOY

The candle is burning, its flame so bright  
and joy floods the soul to our delight.  
For the Light of Life has shone upon us  
bringing joy so perfect and marvellous.

Joy unspeakable and full of glory  
as we remember the Christmas story.  
How The Almighty God had come to earth  
born as a baby by a virgin birth

### The candle of LOVE

The candle of God's love burns ever bright,  
brightening up even the darkest night.  
It turns water into precious wine  
and these things of earth then become divine.

For we're loved with an everlasting love  
coming from God and lifting us above  
this earthly plain to the heights of heaven  
where we can rest in Him all forgiven

By Roysten Allen

## **The House of Christmas” by G.K. Chesterton**

...This world is wild as an old wives' tale,  
And strange the plain things are,  
The earth is enough and the air is enough  
For our wonder and our war;  
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings  
And our peace is put in impossible things  
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings  
Round an incredible star.

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 that are,  
To the place where God was homeless  
And all men are at home.

## **Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**

BY ROBERT FROST

Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.