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 Church of the Holy Faith
 Christmas Day II
 Is. 62:6-12; Ps 97;
 Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:1-20
 December 25, 2024

Too Much Advent Music

Isn't it wonderful to sing Christmas hymns? As a child, I loved playing Christmas music. I would drape myself over the chair in the living room and carefully lower the needle of the record player on the Perry Como Christmas album tucked away in my parents' stereo cabinet and play it over and over. Yes, I realize I just seriously dated myself. In the last several years, though, I've become somewhat of a Christmas music purist, or some might say snob, refusing to play very many Christmas carols until now. We have such beautiful Advent hymns I don't want to commingle the musical sentiments. Advent is about waiting and preparing and longing. I love hearing Silent Night for the first time on Christmas Eve in a candlelit church. "Too much Christmas music, too soon!" I think to myself every year. Until this year, when I came across an article entitled "Not Enough Christmas Music."¹ The author, a philosophy professor at Villanova University, identified himself as a liturgically inclined person and expressed a similar disdain for Christmas music before December 24th. There was a twist, however. "[I]n recent years," he wrote, "I have listened more closely and have realized that we barely have any Christmas music at all, early or late. We are a culture with too much Advent music."

He went on to explain that many of our popular songs express *longing* for Christmas. "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas," "It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas," "All I want for Christmas," "I'll be home for Christmas." In that sense, these familiar tunes resonate with our

¹ "Not Enough Christmas Music," *Plough*, December 9, 2024.
https://www.plough.com/en/topics/culture/holidays/christmas-readings/not-enough-christmas-music?utm_source=Plough+-+English&utm_campaign=bd6a90d81d-Weekly_2024-12-14&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-d6271192d1-297035524

Advent musical longings: a desire to have a presence that is not yet present. For Christians, however, the Advent longings end with Christmas music saturated with eternal, not fleeting, joy. Instead of gathering for Christmas for one day, the next day returning unwanted gifts, the next day taking down the tree, and the next returning to work, the joy of Christ's birth is never-ending. Christmas is the celebration of the One who was and is and is to come. To be a Christian is to dwell in both the longing to see God's face and the rejoicing of his presence with us now.

The shepherds living in the fields knew this longing. They never expected the joyful news of God's Incarnate presence would be revealed to them, however. After getting over the initial terror of a multitude of heavenly angels announcing the arrival of a Savior and Messiah, and after the sky was clear and quiet again, they say to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." The shepherds didn't have to go. The angels didn't command them to go. They weren't given a missionary duty; no heavenly voice bellowed "go tell it on the mountain." The Lord made the birth of Christ known to them with a simple invitation: Go, see for yourselves, go wonder, go participate, go accept the gift that has been revealed to you. And they did. They set aside whatever was previously planned for that night, they made whatever arrangements they had to do with their flocks, and they went. Once there, they amazed everyone with their story, and returned, glorifying, and praising God for all they had heard and seen.

We too, have received an invitation to accept the gift that has been revealed to us: the revelation that Christ came to give us new life, not more of the life we already have. God decided to invade our lives with a vision and message so spectacular as to be incredible, unless, like the shepherds, we are ready to accept and believe it. We are invited to transition our Advent longings with joyful Christmas music and twelve days of Christmastide celebration. Christmas is a time to rest in joy, a resting in joy that modern life seems to resist. As the secular world packs up its

Christmas music filled with longings that may or may not have been fulfilled, and hurls itself into the New Year with resolutions to do and get more, Mary, Joseph, the angels and the shepherds all invite us to accept the gift of God Incarnate. Visit for a while. We have twelve days of Christmastide to linger and love, to rejoice, ponder, and celebrate. Even if you are returning to work, or have pressing matters that need attending to, even if you toss your Christmas tree to the curb tomorrow, take time to breathe deeply and savor the amazing invitation to the manger that you have received. And yes, I'm still going to wait until December 24th to listen to Christmas music. Joy to the world the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king!

Let every heart, including yours, prepare Him room. Amen.