

Light, Love, and the Wonder of Christmas

John 1:1-5

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In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

“Let’s go look at the lights.” I hear people of all ages saying that – driving around the neighborhoods to look at Christmas lights – some simple, some elaborate. Lights on these cold dark nights brings joy.

“I love the candles this time of year.” Candles in windows. Advent candles reminding us to move gradually toward the Christmas star, angels singing and a babe born in Bethlehem.

Light in the darkness. Primordial. Ancient. Sacred.

I keep thinking about what it means for us. Part of the spiritual life is to consider how light is both simple and complex and a focus of celebrations.

What are some ways you celebrate the inner light and Divine light?

Festivals of Light abound throughout the world in both spiritual and secular contexts:

- The Hindu festival of Diwali involves conquering darkness with light.
- The Jewish celebration of Hanukkah recalls when a single jar of oil lasted eight days so that the Jews could rededicate the temple in Jerusalem.
- Kwanzaa requires the lighting of a single candle each night for a week to lift up seven common principles of African American culture

The first chapter of John’s account of the Divine Light of Christ coming into the world. It is not like Luke’s story of shepherds and angels, and babe in a manger. It is not Matthew’s story of a shining star leading the magi from the east to Bethlehem. John’s is a mystical text, a cosmic text full of riddles and paradoxes. It was about trying to put into words Divine Light and Love.

Words are not enough. Hildegard of Bingen knew that. She was a poet, a painter, a mystic, musician. She wrote the word of God is everywhere and in everything, for “without the Word of God no creature has being. God’s Word is in all creation, visible and invisible.”

Hildegard is teaching about the Cosmic Christ, for the Cosmic Christ—or cosmic wisdom—is the image of God in all things. It’s the light in everything, as science today assures us that there

are light waves or photons in every atom in the universe. Hildegard often saw the light in all things. She painted it and set it to music, which is why she speaks of her paintings, visions, and mandalas as “illuminations.” Divine is everywhere, and it renders all beings holy, all beings luminous and numinous, full of creativity and generativity. (1)

This Christmas how might we be aware of this light, the life was the light of all people, the Cosmic Christ?

Richard Rohr offers these words that gave me another lens for considering this light.

In the prologue to John’s Gospel (John 1:1-11), he not talking about Jesus; it’s talking about Christ. ...In my translation, instead of “Word,” which is taken from Greek philosophy’s *Logos*, I’m going to substitute the word “Blueprint,” because it’s really the same meaning. *Logos* is the inner *blueprint*.

In the beginning was the Blueprint, and the Blueprint was with God, and the Blueprint was God. . . . And all things came to be through this inner plan. The inner reality of God was about to become manifest in the outer world as the Cosmic Christ.

No one thing came to be except through this Blueprint and plan. All that came to be had life in the one. Now it’s become personalized. This great universal Christ mystery since the beginning of time now becomes specific in the body and the person of Jesus. The blueprint has become personified and visible as a human being.

And that life was the light of humanity. John is describing a bigger life, a bigger light, from which we all draw. This is Consciousness—a pre-existent form that is the eternal or one light. This great light or consciousness is the source of our little piece of light, as it were. You can also substitute the word Love. It all began with a cosmic act of Love.

This Light/Life/Love shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. “

This Blueprint was the true light that enlightens all human beings who have come into the world. So, the true light, Consciousness, or Love itself precedes and connects and feeds all of our smaller lights and attractions. (2)

Maybe this helps us consider more deeply why we are drawn to the light in this season of cold dark winter.

This Tuesday Dec. 21, is the Winter Solstice. The ancients knew that the winter solstice was the longest night of the year—and that meant that the sun was beginning its long journey back towards earth. It was a time of celebration, and for rejoicing in the knowledge that soon, the warm days of spring would return, and the dormant earth would come back to life. On this one day, the sun stands still in the sky, and everyone on earth knows that change is coming.

Light in the darkness. Primordial. Ancient. Sacred. A Cosmic Christ. A Celtic Connection.

Just this week I learned of a place in Ireland where the Winter Solstice has special meaning.

Newgrange is a Stone Age (Neolithic) monument in the Boyne Valley in Eastern Ireland. Scholars believe it was constructed about 5,200 years ago (3,200 B.C.) which makes it older than Stonehenge and the Great Pyramids of Giza. Newgrange is a large circular mound with a stone passageway and chambers inside.

The mound is ringed by large kerbstones, some of which are engraved with spiral symbols. The spiral is said to be an important spiritual marking symbolizing the inner and outer worlds and the themes of birth, death, and rebirth.

It is speculated that the sun formed an important part of the religious beliefs of the neolithic ("New" Stone Age) people who built it. Newgrange was designed for a ritualistic capturing of the sun on the shortest day of the year, the Winter Solstice, as the room gets flooded with sunlight. The rising sun shines directly along the long passage into the chamber for about 17 minutes and illuminates the chamber floor. (3)

Light in the darkness. Primordial. Ancient. Sacred. Neolithic. Celtic. A Cosmic Christ.

This past we year we have often struggled to see light in the darkness. As we ponder what Divine Love, Love Incarnate, mean for us this Christmas, may we know that the source of Divine love and light has been shining and calling to people through the centuries. Keep watching for the light. Celebrate the gifts of love and wonder. Let us be instruments of Christ's sacred light now, on Christmas and every day. Amen.

1) Matthew Fox, "The Cosmic Christ and Hildegard," 7.10.2019

<https://dailymeditationswithmatthewfox.org/2019/07/10/the-cosmic-christ-and-hildegard/>

2) Richard Rohr, "The Blueprint," Center for Action and Contemplation 10.24.2016

<https://cac.org/the-blueprint-2016-10-24/>

3) Newgrange.com – World Heritage Site

<https://www.newgrange.com/#:~:text=Newgrange%20is%20a%205%2C200%20year,a%20chamber%20with%203%20alcoves.>