

Christmas
25 December 2011

The Legends surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ our many. Here is another, not to familiar legend.

A long time ago, in a far away land, the sun had long set, and cool air blanketed the earth. The night was calm, stars glistened and the moon beamed fully. The hills around Bethlehem were still, like most other nights.

On this night, however, the stillness was shaken, music drifted across the land, as if a heavenly choir were singing. Shepherds rose, gazed skyward, and made their way to Bethlehem. The shepherds came to a place where proud parents, lovingly gazed on a new born infant in swaddling clothes. Joseph and Mary were startled by the shepherds. With the wood crackling on the fire, all stood and knelt around the child in hushed silence. The crackling grew louder but not from the fire. Puzzled by the sound, all looked around. Suddenly, what seemed to be thousands of butterflies, came forth from chrysalis and crevices, in a ballet of praise to God before the child. Butterflies filled Bethlehem, causing all to wonder what is taking place.

According to legends, myriads of butterflies, danced throughout Jerusalem on the day of Resurrection.

The butterfly emerging from the chrysalis has long been a Christian symbol of new life. On that holy night centuries ago, God came into this world and took on our human flesh, forever sanctifying all human life. Through Jesus, sin and death are defeated. God's entry into our world has changed human history. Tonight we proclaim again --- God is with us!

Throughout our lives we mirror the life of butterflies. Times when we feel as lowly as a worm, or struggling as if held in a chrysalis. Some who gather here today dealing with unemployment, family tensions, addictive behaviors, low self esteem, health concerns, grieving losses. Here we are reminded that the Lord is with us and with his graces we will dance again as praises as butterflies.

Mary Marrocco writes, "For his presence: God has come among his people, us. For his mercy: God comes not with vengeance, but with loving kindness. For his faithfulness: God remembers is covenant with us, even when we forget." (*Living Faith, December 24, 2011, Fenton, MO, 2011*).

The butterfly is a sign of God's promise, that with him at our side, we will come over all. Around this table we are formed and fed in that promise, through God's Word and Christ's body and blood.

And as Caryll Houselander writes, "Christ is our dream come true. This is the wholeness of God's love made flesh. He is beautiful, and he is ours. Come, let us adore. (*Give us This Day, December 2011, p. 300, Collegetown, MN*)

Christ is our savior. He is our rock and strength. He leads us through tears to a dance of joy. Come, let us adore.