



For your devotional time this Christmas week:

“We know what time it is,
how it is now the moment for us to wake from sleep.
For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers;
the night is far gone, the day is near.
Let us then lay aside the works of darkness
and put on the armor of light.” (Romans 13.11-12)

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“Almost nobody has seen God. But everybody has seen babies, and most people like them. If God wanted to be loved as well as feared, [God] moved correctly here. [. . .] No creature born on earth is more dependent, helpless, and vulnerable than a human baby. That God was content to enter human history in this manner says a lot about [the Divine]. It utterly destroys any idea that God is hostile toward humankind. It’s hard not to love and trust such a powerful Being who trusted [God’s own self] within the arms of the human family – with one of us.” (News anchor Harry Reasoner quoted in the *UMR*, circa 2002)

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“We who have so much to do seek quiet spaces to hear God’s voice each day. We who are anxious over many things look forward to God’s coming among us. We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of God’s kingdom. We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of God’s presence. We are God’s people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light. To God we say, “Come Lord Jesus!” (Henri Nouwen)

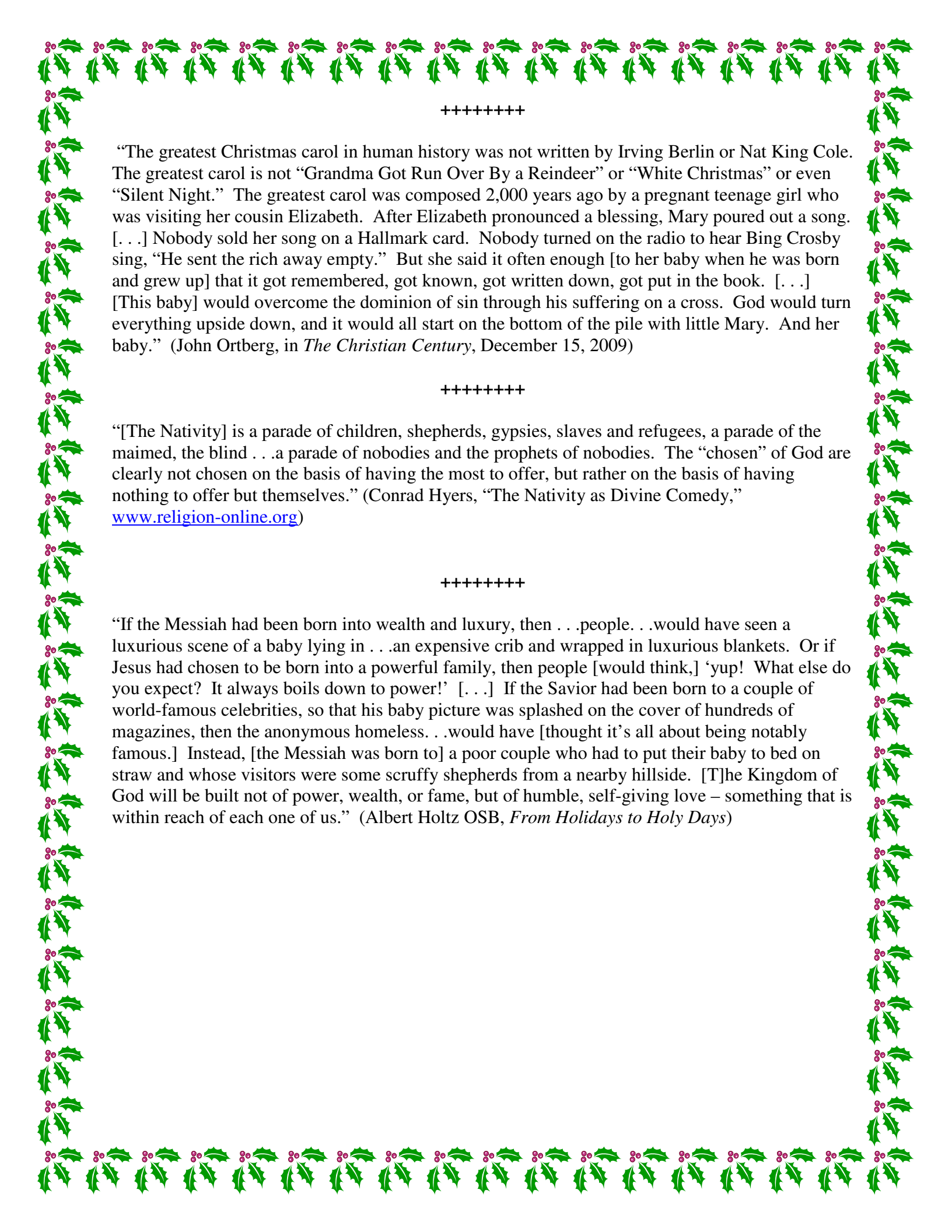
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“The gospel teaches that Christ was born, and that he died and suffered everything on our behalf, as is . . . declared by the angel. In these words, [we] clearly see that he is born *for us*. [The angel] does not simply say, Christ is born, but to *you* he is born. Neither does [the angel] say, I bring glad tidings, but *to you* I bring glad tidings of great joy. Furthermore, this joy was not to remain in Christ, but it shall be to *all the people*. (Martin Luther quoted in *Watch for the Light*)

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“When the world was dark and the city was quiet, you came.
You crept in beside us.
And no one knew.
Only the few who dared to believe that God might do something different.
Will you do the same this Christmas?

[T]he fullness our lives long for depends on us being as open and vulnerable to you as you were to us, when you came, wearing no more than diapers, and trusting human hands to hold their Maker.”
(From “When the World Was Dark” GIA Publications 2000)



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“The greatest Christmas carol in human history was not written by Irving Berlin or Nat King Cole. The greatest carol is not “Grandma Got Run Over By a Reindeer” or “White Christmas” or even “Silent Night.” The greatest carol was composed 2,000 years ago by a pregnant teenage girl who was visiting her cousin Elizabeth. After Elizabeth pronounced a blessing, Mary poured out a song. [. . .] Nobody sold her song on a Hallmark card. Nobody turned on the radio to hear Bing Crosby sing, “He sent the rich away empty.” But she said it often enough [to her baby when he was born and grew up] that it got remembered, got known, got written down, got put in the book. [. . .] [This baby] would overcome the dominion of sin through his suffering on a cross. God would turn everything upside down, and it would all start on the bottom of the pile with little Mary. And her baby.” (John Ortberg, in *The Christian Century*, December 15, 2009)

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“[The Nativity] is a parade of children, shepherds, gypsies, slaves and refugees, a parade of the maimed, the blind . . . a parade of nobodies and the prophets of nobodies. The “chosen” of God are clearly not chosen on the basis of having the most to offer, but rather on the basis of having nothing to offer but themselves.” (Conrad Hyers, “The Nativity as Divine Comedy,” www.religion-online.org)

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“If the Messiah had been born into wealth and luxury, then . . . people . . . would have seen a luxurious scene of a baby lying in . . . an expensive crib and wrapped in luxurious blankets. Or if Jesus had chosen to be born into a powerful family, then people [would think,] ‘yup! What else do you expect? It always boils down to power!’ [. . .] If the Savior had been born to a couple of world-famous celebrities, so that his baby picture was splashed on the cover of hundreds of magazines, then the anonymous homeless . . . would have [thought it’s all about being notably famous.] Instead, [the Messiah was born to] a poor couple who had to put their baby to bed on straw and whose visitors were some scruffy shepherds from a nearby hillside. [T]he Kingdom of God will be built not of power, wealth, or fame, but of humble, self-giving love – something that is within reach of each one of us.” (Albert Holtz OSB, *From Holidays to Holy Days*)