

**Matthew 1:18 - 2:1 (NIV)** <sup>18</sup>This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. <sup>19</sup>Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. <sup>20</sup>But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. <sup>21</sup>She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, <sup>22</sup>because he will save his people from their sins.” <sup>23</sup>All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: <sup>24</sup>“The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”<sup>25</sup>—which means, “God with us.”

**Luke 2:1 - 20 (NIV)** <sup>1</sup>In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. <sup>2</sup>(This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) <sup>3</sup>And everyone went to his own town to register. <sup>4</sup>So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. <sup>5</sup>He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. <sup>6</sup>While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, <sup>7</sup>and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. <sup>8</sup>And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. <sup>9</sup>An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. <sup>10</sup>But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup>Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ<sup>12</sup> the Lord. <sup>12</sup>This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup>Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.”

(Bonnie and Kathy **Silent Night**)

This Christmas Eve I would like to share a poem by  
Helen Steiner Rice  
"the Christmas Guest."

It happened one day at the year's white end,  
Two neighbors called on an old-time friend

And they found his shop so meager and mean,  
Made gay with a thousand boughs of green,

And Conrad was sitting with face a-shine  
When he suddenly stopped as he stitched a twine

And said, "Old friends, at dawn today,  
When the cock was crowing the night away,

The Lord appeared in a dream to me  
And said, 'I am coming your guest to be'.

So I've been busy with feet astir,  
Strewing my shop with branches of fir,

The table is spread and the kettle is shined  
And over the rafters the holly is twined,

And now I will wait for my Lord to appear  
And listen closely so I will hear

His step as He nears my humble place,  
And I open the door and look in His face. . ."

So his friends went home and left Conrad alone,  
For this was the happiest day he had known,

For, long since, his family had passed away  
And Conrad has spent a sad Christmas Day.

But he knew with the Lord as his Christmas guest  
This Christmas would be the dearest and best,

And he listened with only joy in his heart.  
And with every sound he would rise with a start

And look for the Lord to be standing there  
In answer to his earnest prayer

So he ran to the window after hearing a sound,  
But all that he saw on the snow-covered ground-

Was a shabby beggar whose shoes were torn  
And all of his clothes were ragged and worn.

So Conrad was touched and went to the door  
And he said, "Your feet must be frozen and sore,

And I have some shoes in my shop for you  
And a coat that will keep you warmer, too."

So with grateful heart the man went away,  
But as Conrad noticed the time of day

He wondered what made the dear Lord so late  
And how much longer he'd have to wait, --

When he heard a knock and ran to the door,  
But it was only a stranger once more,

A bent, old crone with a shawl of black,  
A bundle of sticks piled on her back.

She asked for only a place to rest,  
But that was reserved for Conrad's Great Guest.

But her voice seemed to plead, "Don't send me away  
Let me rest awhile on Christmas day."

So Conrad brewed her a steaming cup  
And told her to sit at the table and sup.

But after she left he was filled with dismay  
For he saw that the hours were passing away

And the Lord had not come as He said He would,  
And Conrad felt sure he had misunderstood.

When out of the stillness he heard a cry,  
"Please help me and tell me where am I."

So again he opened his friendly door  
And stood disappointed as twice before,

It was only a child who had wandered away  
And was lost from her family on Christmas Day. .

Again Conrad's heart was heavy and sad,  
But he knew he should make this little child glad,

So he called her in and wiped her tears  
And quieted her childish fears.

Then he led her back to her home once more  
But as he entered his own darkened door,--

He knew that the Lord was not coming today  
For the hours of Christmas had passed away.

So he went to his room and knelt down to pray  
And he said, "Dear Lord, why did you delay,

What kept You from coming to call on me,  
For I wanted so much Your face to see. . ."

When soft in the silence a voice he heard,  
"Lift up your head for I kept My word--

Three times My shadow crossed your floor--  
Three times I came to your lonely door--

For I was the beggar with bruised, cold feet,  
I was the woman you gave to eat,  
And I was the child on the homeless street."

Helen Steiner Rice

We often hear people speak about the Spirit of Christmas this time of year and people seem to have many different ideas just what the Spirit of Christmas is.

The Spirit of Christmas is simply the Spirit of Christ. I think that this poem, "The Christmas Guest", by Helen Steiner Rice speaks powerfully of the Spirit of Christmas and the Spirit of Christ being one and the same....

**Matthew 25:34 - 40 (NIV) <sup>34</sup>“Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup>For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup>I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ <sup>37</sup>“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup>When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ <sup>40</sup>“The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’**

I would like to challenge all of us to allow God to make this Spirit of Christmas, The Spirit of Christ Himself, alive within each of our lives this Christmas Eve?

I can't think of a more appropriate, a more fitting time to partake together of communion than on the eve of Christ birth.

### **COMMUNION**

**Matt 26:26 (NIV) While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."**

**27 (NIV) Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you."**

**28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.**

**29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."**

(Instruction--come up by family & be served communion)

30 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

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