

## Christmas 2018: Divinity Wrapped in Humanity

by Rev. Robert L. Marciano, KHS

Dec. 25, 2018—It was a chance of a lifetime. Natalie Gilbert, a 13-year-old eighth grader from Lake Oswego, Oregon had won the competition to sing the national anthem at the first playoff home game between the Portland Trail Blazers and the Dallas Mavericks. It was a sellout crowd and a nationally televised audience of millions. She had sung the song hundreds of times and even minutes before in the locker room for the home team and now her big moment was here. As the nation's giant flag was unfurled and she took to center court to sing a hush fell over the crowd. She began perfectly on key, and then, just a few lines into the song, she suddenly went blank and forgot the words, stumbling to regain her poise. Helpless and with tears in her eyes, she glanced to the sidelines for help. And that is when he appeared as Coach Maurice Cheeks of the Blazers walked to her and placed his arm around her and began to sing along. As Natalie begins singing again, the Coach motions to the crowd to join in and suddenly the entire arena is singing too. The struggling singer has been saved and a thunderous applause erupts when the song finishes as Coach Cheeks and Natalie walk off together.

My friends, that is precisely what occurred on that silent night 2000 years ago. For centuries the song of love that had been placed in the hearts of humanity from creation was lost. The Almighty had sent His message throughout the centuries; prophets and holy men and women had proclaimed it but over and over again the people who received it strayed and lost their way. The words of the song were somehow silent, and so finally, on a cold and dark night while the world slept, infinity was wrapped in humanity and swaddling bands surrounded the Son of God, the Word made flesh who dwelt among us.

My friends, as we gather here this Christmas, we come from an imperfect world. We know full well that outside these sturdy walls we need not go far to find strife and discord. We come from a world always on the edge of war, from families maybe splintered by division. We have lives burdened with illness or maybe the recent loss of a loved one. We come from a human condition that is broken with worries beyond our grasp. But here we are—you and I—joined with Christians throughout the world, from Rome to Ecuador, from Spain to Afghanistan, and right to this very place, to join in the wonder and awe of that first Silent Night, and with speechless gratitude to remember with devotion that tiny babe who brightened the night of Bethlehem so long ago; who left His heavenly home to take on human flesh so that in His mysterious and boundless love for each of us He might bring us the lasting gift of heavenly peace.

Didn't you feel it when the notes of those bells and hymns began? Or when the lights came on? Or when you came into church and saw the splendor before you? For just a moment we feel all those problems melt away as we kneel here with a measure of peace that defies words that comes from only one place: a Father who loved us so much that He gave us His Only Son.

What boundless love He shows us each time we pause and remember that sacred night some 2000 years ago when angelic hosts filled the night sky with song and the poorest of the earth, lowly shepherds in those fields, became the richest men of all. And although they are far from us in time and place, the same peace can be ours from this tiny babe with outstretched arms. It is beyond price, for here in this sacred place, even for just a few moments, we can find peace—His peace—and take home with us the gift of the Savior as only He can give.

My friends, He reached down to us, so that you and I might reach up to Him. May the graces of the Prince of Peace, the Babe of Bethlehem, flow in abundance across the threshold of your lives and into the hearts of all whom you love. And may this Christmas be the brightest of all—for that is why we have the privilege and the joy to say: *Feliz Navidad. Joyeux Noel. Buon Natale.* MERRY CHRISTMAS!