

Housewarming (Christmas Eve)

Unitarian Universalist Church of Olinda

Rev. Rodrigo Emilio Solano-Quesnel

24 December, 2022



Olinda Church Building in Winter © 2022 Rod E.S.Q.

I have often spoken about the Mexican holiday tradition of *posadas*, in which folks in small communities re-enact an interpretation of the Christmas story, wherein Mary and Joseph knock at different doors, looking for lodging, and repeatedly being turned away, all the while, Mary being pregnant and expecting her son Jesus. The word *posada* is Spanish for *inn*.

But some of the keener listeners among you may have noticed that *inn* is not the word I used when reading out the Christmas lesson today. Sure, most current translations of Luke 2:7 speak about there being “no room at the inn”, but among the many parts of the Christmas story that raise questions for scholars, the translation of the word *inn* (for the ancient Greek *katalouma*) comes up.

Many scholars believe that the word could more accurately be translated as *guest room* (which is the word I used today). Households in Bethlehem, like many places in the region at the time, would likely have a guest room, to house relatives or other travelers, and some biblical scholars suggest that the holy family in the story may have been staying with their extended family (Bethlehem, after all, would have been a hometown of sorts for Joseph). In that case, the house would have been more crowded than expected, and they would have had to stay in the lower level of the home, were the animals were also around... not where they would have expected to be, but a warm enough space to bear and shelter a child.

This evening, some of us are not where we expected to be... as our church building was snowed in, our preferred spiritual home is less

accessible than usual, some among us may have had travel plans upended this weekend, you may be hosting unexpectedly, or more likely have visitors sending regrets. Nonetheless, if you are joining us in this space, you are likely to have found a place that is warm enough to shelter you and anyone around you, and to bear witness to this holiday, however you feel the need to observe it.

Whichever your observances, my friends, the realities of this season – as witnessed particularly over the past couple of days – are that our shelter is an important place in which to find a homebase. And setting it up in the way that makes that stay as pleasant and heartwarming as possible is part of the necessity, and spirit, of the season.

This month, my friends, we have been exploring the call for us to get into the mood for what we might call “hibernation”, and today is a good place to put that into practice. Be it decking the hall, lighting a fire, watching a show featuring a fire – or any other classic film, or simply putting on a good winter sweater with the right winter food, today is a good place to put the spirit of hibernation into practice.

My friends, it is also a day in which to witness the hardship that many in our community have in being able to hibernate in comfort, and we make it a practice to remember all our community members, near and far, and make efforts to make access for housewarming spaces easier and more accessible, be it with gifts of money, time, or advocacy. That is also part of the necessity, and spirit, of the season.

And so, my friends, just as we warm each other today with our presence, we may warm our hearts and our homes tonight, and search to warm the hearts and the homes of those around us.

So may it be,
In the Spirit of the Season,
Amen

*Suggested Carols:***#244 It Came upon the Midnight Clear**

~)-| Words: Edmund Hamilton Sears, 1810-1876

Music: Richard Storrs Willis, 1819-1900

CAROL

#235 Deck the Hall with Boughs of Holly

Words: Traditional Welsh

Music: Old Welsh Carol

YULE

#241 In the Bleak Midwinter

Words: Christina Georgina Rossetti, 1830-1894

~)-| New words by John Andrew Storey, 1935-1997

Music: Gustav Theodore Holst, 1874-1934

CRANHAM

#253 O Come, All Ye Faithful

Words: John Francis Wade, 1711-1786, tr. By Frederick Oakley, 1802-1880, et al.

Music: John Francis Wade's manuscript, c. 1740-1743

ADESTE FIDELES

#228 Once in Royal David's City

~)-| Words: Carl G. Seaburg 1922-1998, based on a text of Mrs. C. F. Alexander

Music: Henry John Gauntlett, 1805-1876, harmony by Arthur Henry Mann, 1850-1929, renewed 1985
Novello & Co., Ltd.

IRBY

#245 Joy to the World!

Words: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748, alt.

Music: *Methodist Collection of Tunes*, 1833

COMFORT

#251 Silent Night, Holy Night

Words: Joseph Mohr, 1792-1848

Music: Franz Xaver Gruber, 1787-1868

STILLE NACHT