



Dear friends, brothers and sisters,

*O Little Town of Bethlehem
How still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep
The silent stars go by.
Yet in thy dark streets shineth
The everlasting Light;
The hopes and fears of all the years
Are met in Thee tonight.*

*How silently, how silently
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heaven.
No ear may hear His coming;
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still
The dear Christ enters in.*

Phillips Brooks

When one travels to Bethlehem in 2008 one experiences police checkpoints, overlapping, gaudy and competing church structures on the assumed site of the nativity and hostility between Abraham's two sons. The gateway door is shortened so that horses cannot be ridden in.

Certainly this does not bring any sense of wonderment and awe when visiting the city and place of Christ's birth. However, perhaps things are not so very different now from then. For, Joseph and Mary made the untimely trip to Bethlehem because of Roman decree and surely there were soldiers controlling the pilgrims' movements. Man's response to revelation seems to be to build something. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that man must worship God in Spirit and in Truth. The angels' message was to be given to "all mankind."

The words of this carol are true then as they are now – "How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is given. So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of His Heaven. Where meek souls will receive Him still, The dear Christ enters in."

The physical Christ was given silently in Bethlehem and the Spirit of Christ quietly enters into every heart which longs for Him and asks Him today. That is what brings us our sense of wonderment and awe, our thanksgiving and praise. To God be the Glory for His wonderful plan of Salvation.

We are so pleased to greet you during this sacred season, remembering Christ's birth. Worship, treasure and adore Him.

May you and your families be blessed by the Presence of the Savior in your hearts and lives, today and in the New Year, 2009.

With our appreciation,
Staff of Slavic International Association of Ministries
"Good Samaritan"
Peter Radchuk, President

