

"Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord."

Luke 2:11

We knew only his name, not his story. Leon, just 37 years old, was one of those rootless souls who, by life's violent incisions, become severed from their history and their future. He had come to us from a local boarding home, comatose and dying. He came with no friend or family to attend his imminent passage. So, through the night of Christmas Eve, Kathy, a young, off-duty nurse, sat silently with Leon, adamant that he should not die alone.

Leon had a quiet death. Very little changed in him except for stilled breathing and the relaxed mask that follows expiration. It was Kathy who changed. In that sterile hospital room, grey-lit with early morning, the palpable breath of God embraced her. She knew, and from that Christmas moment will always know, that all life beats within the Divine Heart; that we are sacred and immortal within its mysterious rhythm.

Over these celebratory days, we will orchestrate a series of Christmas moments in our decorations, carols, gifts and feasts. We will visit our treasured memories and revered mangers. We will be blessed by the love of family and friends who are the face of Christ to us.

May we also receive this singular grace: to know that any true Christmas moment comes only when the Spirit of Christ passes through us into the heart of another person. To receive this grace, we may, like Kathy, need to sit in a silent room with a dying stranger. We may need to welcome that ostracized family member who has carelessly injured us. We may need to rediscover, in our own quiet contrition, the radiant Gospel commitment that has paled in us.

Meister Eckhart, seven centuries ago, sought such a Christmas moment:

*Today we celebrate the Eternal Birth
which God the Father has borne
and never ceases to bear in all eternity.
But if it takes not place in me, what avails it?
Everything lies in this, that it should take place in me.*