

# The Imperative that Love Demands

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16 December 2022



Human beings tell stories to make the meaning that we need to discover in order to live well. The narratives of scripture, like that of the birth of Jesus, give greater returns each time we recall them, so freshly intertwined are they with the stories of our own lives. Our deepening spiritual experience, the raising and clarifying of consciousness that is the result of our meditation, is fed by the Word that is alive and active. It also leads us back to scripture with a new hunger and capacity for insight.

Christmas is a feast of meaning. Much of it is reflected in our cultural forms of celebrating at this time of year. [ . . . ] But all these forms depend on the personal experience of what Christmas is most essentially about – the radical poverty and simplicity, the intoxicating proximity to God that our total dependence reveals.

Let us hold each other in our hearts in this joyful season. May we be restored to the love of the earth needed if we are to repair the damage we have inflicted on it. May our life as community increase the energy of peace that our divided world is striving for as well as the justice on which peace depends – the very wisdom that the newborn Jesus embodies.

After meditation: “The Same and the Other” by Gina Franco, published in Poem-a-Day by the Academy of American Poets, December 3, 2019 at [poets.org/poem-a-day](https://poets.org/poem-a-day).

## The Same and the Other

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in each hand a disparate dream: in all dreams

another far

too quiet: delirium

of the mask and God

behind it: paradise

had no winter like

this: this

is the one where the infant sleeps in

the dirt

the sleep

of a dreamless mind so far from home

he no

longer resembles anyone:

his mother, thrown

down, hunted, sick

with fear, sleeps next to him among the filth of

animals: his father

watches (the imperative

that love

—not solace—

demands), for there is no room

for another

sleeper: the desert will keep

bringing

its mirage,

no doubt:

*the child will walk in his shimmering*

*garden, says*

the wilderness, *if you just get across:*

notes in

the light rise and rest:

sole face left (*remember you are dust*)

of our first lost image

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