

ADVENT WREATH CEREMONY
NOVA 1992

TODAY, DEAR LORD, AS WE LIGHT THIS CANDLE [THESE CANDLES],
WE REMIND OURSELVES THAT THERE WILL BE ONLY
[THREE/TWO/ONE/NO] MORE SUNDAYS BEFORE THE BIRTH OF THE
CHRIST CHILD. IN ORDER TO PREPARE FOR THIS GREAT EVENT,
GRANT US YOUR PEACE WITHIN OUR HEARTS, OUR FAMILY, THE NOVA
COMMUNITY, AND OUR WORLD.

WE PRAY FOR OUR NEIGHBORS IN [NAME PLACE] AND ALL PARTS OF
THE WORLD, THAT THEY MAY BE AT PEACE THIS DAY: FREE FROM
HUNGER, FREE FROM FEAR, COMFORTED IN THEIR SORROW, AND
AWARE OF YOUR GREAT LOVE FOR THEM.

-pm

(Sing Advent chant: "Yahweh is the path of peace. Jesus is
the way of love. Justice is the sign of peace." or other
peace song)

THE CHRISTMAS TREE
(Delta, Colorado)

Trees just do not grow up here on the high plateaus of the Rockies-- everybody knows that. Trees need good soil and good weather and up here there's no soil and terrible weather. People do not live here. Nothing can live up here and certainly not trees. That's why the tree is a kind of miracle.

The tree is a juniper, and it grows beside U.S. 50 utterly alone, not another tree for miles. Nobody remembers who put the first Christmas ornament on it--some whimsical motorist of years ago. From that day to this, the tree has been redecorated each year. Nobody knows who does it. But each year, by Christmas day, the tree has become a Christmas tree.

The tree, which has no business growing here at all, has survived against all the odds. The summer droughts somehow haven't killed it, or the winter storms. When the highway builders came out to widen the road they could have taken the tree with one pass of their bulldozer. But some impulse led them to start widening the road just a few feet past the tree. The trucks pass so close that they rattle the tree's branches. The tree has also survived the trucks.

The tree violates the laws of man and nature. It is too close to the highway for man, and not far enough away for nature. The tree pays no attention. It is where it is. It survives.

People who live in Grand Junction, thirty miles one way, and in Delta, Colorado, fifteen miles the other way, all know about and love the tree. They have Christmas trees of their own, of course, the kind of trees that are brought to town in trucks and sold in vacant lots and put up in living rooms. This one tree belongs to nobody and to everybody.

Just looking at it makes you think about how unexpected life on earth can be. The tree is so lonely and so brave that it seems to offer courage to those who pass it--and a message. It is the Christmas message: that there is life and hope even in a rough world.

Source: Charles Kuralt, On the Road with Charles Kuralt
(New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1985), pp. 315-316.

On Christmas
we celebrate
the unimaginable:

heaven uniting with earth,
eternity entering time,
divinity taking on human form,
angels proclaiming good news to poor shepherds,
a baby, center-stage.

This gives us hope!

Hope for the many dichotomies
which divide us.

May the fractured parts of all life
become whole, reconciled and integrated.

May there be Peace on earth!

So, let us be merry
we have cause for joy!

Merry Christmas!

Gil and Lonja

December 1997

Christmas Greetings

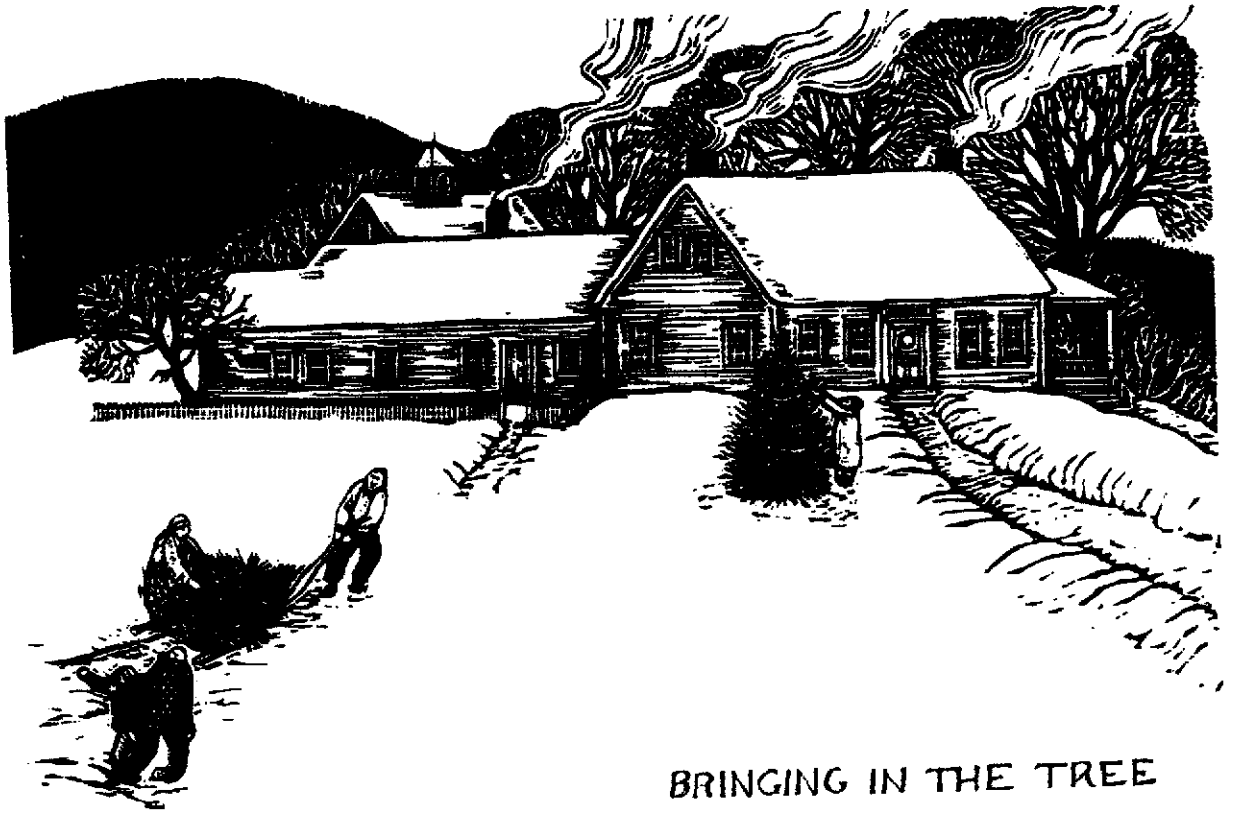
Good Tidings of peace and joy
be with you!

December's gifts--custom, ceremony, celebration, consecration--
come to us, not in tissue and ribbons, but in cherished
memories.

This is the month of miracles:
the oil that burns for eight days;
the royal son born in a stable;
the inexplicable return of light on the
longest darkest night of the year.

Where there is love, there are always miracles.
And where there are miracles, there is great joy.
May yours be such a charmed life,
now and in 1997.

Sonja and Gil



BRINGING IN THE TREE

from an original woodcut by MARY AZARIAN
Farmhouse Press, RD 2, Box 831, Plainfield, VT 05667

*Good tidings of peace and joy
be with you!*

*December's gifts - customs, ceremony, celebration, consecration -
come to us, not in tissue and ribbons, but in cherished
memories.*

*This is the month of miracles:
the oil that burns for eight days;
the royal son born in a stable;
the inexplicable return of light on the
longest darkest night of the year.*

*Where there is love, there are always miracles.
And where there are miracles, there is great joy.
May yours be such a charmed life,
now and in 2009.*

(Composed by Sonja in 1996)

Sonja

God made sun and moon to distinguish seasons, and day and night, and we cannot have the fruits of the earth but in their seasons: But God hath made no decree to distinguish the seasons of his mercies. In paradise, the fruits were ripe, the first minute, and in heaven it is alwaies Autumne, his mercies are ever in their maturity. We ask our daily bread, and God never sayes you should have come yesterday, he never sayes you must againe to morrow, but to day if you will heare his voice, to day he will heare you. If some King of the earth have so large an extent of Dominion, in North and South, as that he hath Winter and Summer together in his Dominions, so large an extent East and West, as that he hath day and night together in his Dominions, much more hath God mercy and justice together: He brought light out of darknesse, not out of a lesser light; he can bring thy Summer out of Winter, though thou have no Spring; though in the wayes of fortune, or understanding, or conscience, thou have been benighted till now, wintred and frozen, clouded and eclipsed, damped and benumbed, smothered and stupified till now, now God comes to thee, not as in the dawning of the day, not as in the bud of the spring, but as the Sun at noon to illustrate all shadowes, as the sheaves in harvest, to fill all penuries, all occasions invite his mercies, and all times are his seasons.

John Donne

Christmas Day, 1624

St. Paul's Cathedral

Cited in Helen Norris, More than Seven
Watchmen: A Novel (Grand Rapids, MI:
Zondervan Publishing House, 1985)

HAPPY 2001, EVERYBODY !!!

Sonja

May I, may you, may we
Not die unlived lives.

May none of us live in fear
Of falling or catching fire.

May we choose to inhabit our days,
To allow our living to open us,
To make us less afraid,
More accessible,
To loosen our hearts
Until they become wings,
Torches, promises.

May each of us choose to risk
 Our significance;
To live so that which comes to us
 As seed
Goes to the next as blossom
And that which comes to us as blossom,
 Goes on as fruit.

Dawna Markova
Author and Editor, Utah

Preface for Winter

We give you thanks, Lord, for times and seasons
and now for winter nights
when stars shine coldly bright
and dust is turned to diamond underfoot.
For winter days
when trees are stronger than icy death
and hold in blackened limbs
the promise of the resurrection
For opposites be praised: for heat and cold,
for stillness and the snow
that sculpts every house and tree, and falls
like some great absolution
to heal the wounded earth.

We thank you more for him
whose birth we celebrate in winter
so men may know, may wildly know,
that love is stronger than the coldest flesh
and mercy blankets all the land
more surely than the snow.
We give you thanks for him
who makes more than children joyful
and does not cheat our laughter in the end.

Joyous Lord,
beyond imagining but not beyond desire,
we give you glory and our song of praise.

Joseph Thomas Nolan