



January 3, 2021

It isn't over!

It's January 2021!!! We have finally been able to put 2020 behind us. Even so, the world is still the same in many ways. Many Christians, observe Advent as the beginning of our "new year", and experience a kind of newness of the secular New Year as a sign of Christmas behind them. Well...not so fast! For Orthodox Christians like Armenians, Greeks, Ethiopians, Massadonians and others...it's not over. Armenian Christmas is January 6th, Epiphany or as some refer to it in other cultures, Dia' de Reyes (Three Kings Day). In Western Armenian you might hear, Shnorhavor Nor Daree yev Soorp Dzuhnoont!!! That's like, Happy New Year and Merry Christmas.

I remember when one of the parents on the playground came up to me after all the children returned to school from their winter break. She said, "My daughter came home from your house the other day and said she wants us to be Armenian!!!" I laughed and then asked..."Why?". She said, "Anna gets 2 Christmases!!!". We both laughed even harder. There IS more than one day various cultures celebrate Christmas. So, my friends...It's NOT over yet!

In our household growing up I loved Armenian Christmas more than anything. If gifts were exchanged, it was more for adults to give a book or something like that. We went to church and ate our own "ethnic" foods. We honored the journey of the three Kings. As I got older there was a sense of remembering just how brave those kings were. How they listened and risked going another way. How they trusted something outside of themselves, outside of the secular world and even outside of religious constructs. Their faith was full of mystery, their faith was prophetic, their faith was wise.

The gift of the Incarnation is not done, once and for all. The fragrance of Christmas lingers and as we look into the beautiful darkness of the night sky, we get a glimpse of just how mysterious Creation is.

Many of you may know the hymn, I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. It's Number 584 in the New Century Hymnal. You will see the note at the bottom corner of the hymn as follows: *This text is based on a Christmas poem by Howard Thurman, a prolific twentieth-century writer, theologian, and teacher.*

The song grew out of Jim Strathdee's music ministry at an intercultural, bilingual congregation in Los Angeles.

Here are the lyrics for you to sit with and pray:

CHORUS:

*I am the Light of the World
You people come and follow me.
If you follow and love, You'll learn the mystery
Of what you were meant to do and be.*

1. When the song of the angels is stilled.
When the star in the sky is gone.
When the kings and the shepherds have found their way home.
The work of Christmas is begun!

2. To find the lost and lonely one,
To heal that broken soul with love,
To feed the hungry children with warmth and good food,
To feel the earth below the sky above!

3. To free the prisoner from all chains,
To make the powerful care,
To rebuild the nations with strength and goodwill,
To see all God's children everywhere!

4. To bring hope to every task you do,
To dance at a baby's new birth,
To make music in an old person's heart,
And sing to the colors of the earth!

I love the last two lines of the chorus: "If you follow and love, You'll learn the mystery Of what you were meant to do and be." My friends, it isn't over. God is not only Still Speaking...God is still working ON us and WITH us. Follow. Love. Learn. Believe. Keep growing in your faith and in time what we were meant to do and be will be revealed.

Blessed Epiphany to you all. It isn't over! Christ's Mass is forever living in us all.

- Rev. Dr. Susan Minasian

Interim Associate Conference Minister for Search and Call