

Halley's Comment

Paul Halley: remarks for the inside cover of the programme 'A King's Christmas' December 12 and 14, 2008, Halifax, NS

Dear Friend and Patron,

Welcome to *A King's Christmas 2008*, the first of what I hope will become an annual tradition. This concert is based on a series I created during my time at the Cathedral of St. John The Divine in New York City and continued in Connecticut using the title *Christmas Angelicus*. The combination of carols old and new with readings from poets and authors across the ages has proved an effective way of opening the door, just a crack, to the wonder, the joy and the mystery of this powerful and poignant season in our busy lives. It is certainly one of the best antidotes to commercial Christmas fatigue I know. The range of human expression offered in response to the Nativity has been, and continues to be overwhelming and complicated. Annie Dillard, one of our featured writers this evening, talks about her childhood experience when, "Like everyone in his right mind, I feared Santa Claus, thinking he was God." She ends her story not with an answer but with an unsettling conclusion - "So once in Israel, love came to us incarnate, stood in the doorway between two worlds, and we were all afraid." This seems an honest appraisal of where most of us stand, and why it is particularly moving when we hear this mix of joy and apprehension, wonder and confusion, in the readings and in the music. It strikes us as true, and we are slightly undone, so we laugh or cry or both. For me this is a considerable improvement on going to the mall, or even opening up Christmas presents.

And on the subject of Christmas presents, while we are constantly reminded of how much is consumed during this season, we also know that a great deal is given. This evening's concert has benefited enormously from the generosity of many people. In response to a request from our narrator, Bruce Nunn, we have been given a wonderful poem by Patrick Lane, which he sent along with the following letter.

Dear Bruce,

It would be an honour to have "A Christmas Poem" read at the concert. How kind of you to consider it worthy. You may print copies of it, if you like, to hand out to people. I don't mind. Poems aren't owned, not really, especially not Christmas poems. I will think fondly of it being out there among people, where it belongs.

My very best,
Patrick.

Thanks to *your* generosity, the proceeds from this concert will be shared between *L'Arche* and *The King's Chapel Choral Scholarship Fund*. You can read more about these worthy causes at the back of this programme. Thank you for joining us this evening. I hope these offerings of song and story will bring more light and gold into your Christmas celebrations.

Yours,
Paul Halley