

Along the Way Dec 20 Winter Solstice and Christmas Day

Even with all its glorious details, the Christmas story leaves a lot to the imagination, which is why in subsequent centuries the followers of Jesus filled in the blanks. None of the gospels specified the date of Jesus' birth and Christians didn't settle on December 25 until the fourth century. It was in the late third century that the Roman Emperor Aurelian established this date as a feast date celebrating the birth of the Unconquered Sun (*Sol Invictus*). The Unconquered Sun who brings more light after the winter solstice becomes for Christians the Son of God who is the light of the world. We are to be reminded each year at this time that darkness will not prevail.

Whether you celebrate the solstice or Christmas or both, it is a time to appreciate the rebirth of light, both spiritual and temporal. In the darkness of winter, in the darkness of our lives, we too need the reassurance that light will come and that we will find a way through our grief, our doubt, and our confusion. During this season, we affirm that the light we need is already here, and that a light shines within a lowly stable, and it changes everything: our fears of darkness are cast out and we can, with the shepherds, find our way to places of birth and beauty. We can, with the heavenly choir, sing of God's justice and love which will prevail in a chaotic and sometimes cruel world. We can, with the wise sages of old, be grateful that we have the gift of light to share with a needy world.

I invite you to spend some time appreciating the light and the beginning of longer daylight during this Solstice and Christmas Season. Have a blessed season of light!

Paula