

12-18-1969

Notes: Christmas Vesper: Songs in the Night (Fragments), 1969

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DATE 12/18/69 OCCASION Christmas VesperTHEME Songs in the Night

- 3 "Songs in the Night" - they have been sung now for almost 2000 years - and there end is not yet - great orators - skilled cantatas - simple carols - He gave Himself - and that was so great a thing that we are still singing about it... ^{Bitter}
4. But our own century - the ^{since} 20th - brought a new unhappy note and tone to this singing - a note of bitterness and nostalgic loneliness. For us the contrast is too great - between our world and the world of Christmas - it is the world's moment of eternity - the glimpse of a warm, lighted house on a winter night. So Edna St. Vincent Millay sings our song in the night - from the lips of a ^{Santa} ~~sleep~~ girl on State St:

"For this your mother shivered in the cold
 For this you bled upon the bitter tree
 A yard of tinsel ribbon bought and sold
 A paper wreath; a day at home for me -
 O Prince of Peace! O Sherwin Dewy rose
 How mute you lie within your manger bed -
 The stone the angel rolled away with tears
 We've laid upon your mouth these thousand
 years"

5. Or Marthe Turner - strange that these 20th Century "Songs in the Night" are written by women - perhaps because they gave birth to the boys

~~12/14~~

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THEME 'Songs in the Night'

who now tonight lie buried in Japan & Germany -
Korea and Viet Nam -

"Well, shall we mock at Him

This Christmas time

And sing of peace when we have only ^{fighting?} ~~fitting?~~

No, let's at least be honest in our weakness

God, we have failed again

We don't seem very apt

At being children

And some of us are sorry -

But why try again?

After so many failures

To think we can do better?

The stars come out so slowly

And in the quiet

Surely there is the hush of angel wings -

God let us go!

We've made a ghastly Christmas!

O Son of God,

How can you love us so

6. And yet - over, around, under all this
sad bottomness - there is this most deep -
this longing for home - the homesickness of the
wandering heart - we see it in a modest
prayer spoken to the Child:

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"Be close Be with me. Hush the deep
last cry

That echo in my ear.

Put out the light that glitters in my eye

The night is here.

Quiesce my hands, restless and quivering

Quench the last tear I weep.

Dismiss my voice, blow out my candle, and sing

My heart to sleep. 20th Century - Song in the Night

7. And now I must ask you to do one more
thing - it may require a deep breath - for there is
mystery and miracle here - the scene is the
same. the Mother, worn and still - the Baby
sleeping. the animals watching - the shepherds
rummy - the world in ^{breathless} mid night - and for
the first time in the world's history - we
bend down to see our God & this Baby is our
God and word, the Prince of Peace, Emmanuel
Very God of very God, Light of Light, I.P.
Alpha and Omega, the Beginning & the End, the
eternal Word made flesh -

8. One day you and I will fully understand
what these words really mean - between ^{now}
and then - tonight and tomorrow - & all our days -

Children may whisper one now "Song in the Night" for the

Al, Decent Jesus Hily, Child