**LONGINGS FOR HOME AT CHRISTMAS**

**Candlelight Christmas Eve, POETRY READINGS, Knox Ottawa, 2018**

**“The House of Christmas” G.K Chesteron**

This world is wild as an old wives' tale,  
And strange the plain things are,  
The earth is enough and the air is enough  
For our wonder and our war;  
But our rest is as far as the fire-drake swings  
And our peace is put in impossible things  
Where clashed and thundered unthinkable wings  
Round an incredible star.  
  
To an open house in the evening  
Home shall men come,  
To an older place than Eden  
And a taller town than Rome.  
To the end of the way of the wandering star,  
To the things that cannot be and that are,  
To the place where God was homeless  
And all men are at home.

**“Nativity” John Donne**

Immensity, cloistered in thy dear womb,

Now leaves his well-beloved imprisonment,

There he hath made himself to his intent

Weak enough, now into our world to come;

But Oh, for thee, for him, hath th' inn no room?

Yet lay him in this stall, and from the Orient,

Stars, and wise men will travel to prevent

Th' effect of Herod's jealous general doom;

See'st thou, my Soul, with thy faith's eyes, how he

Which fills all place, yet none holds him, doth lie?

Was not his pity towards thee wondrous high,

That would have need to be pitied by thee?

Kiss him, and with him into Egypt go,

With his kind mother, who partakes thy woe.

**“Advent” Saint Oscar Romero**

**Advent should** admonish us to discover  
in each brother or sister that we greet,  
in each friend whose hand we shake,  
in each beggar who asks for bread,  
in each worker who wants to use the right to join a union,  
in each peasant who looks for work in the coffee groves,  
the face of Christ.  
Then it would not be possible to rob them,  
to cheat them,  
to deny them their rights.  
They are Christ,  
and whatever is done to them  
Christ will take as done to himself.  
This is what Advent is:  
Christ living among us.

**“The Christmas Night” Lucy Maud Montgomery**

Wrapped was the world in slumber deep,   
By seaward valley and cedarn steep,   
And bright and blest were the dreams of its sleep;   
All the hours of that wonderful night-tide through   
The stars out-blossomed in fields of blue,   
A heavenly chaplet, to diadem   
The King in the manger of Bethlehem.   
  
Out on the hills the shepherds lay,   
Wakeful, that never a lamb might stray,   
Humble and clean of heart were they;   
Thus it was given them to hear   
Marvellous harpings strange and clear,   
Thus it was given them to see   
The heralds of the nativity. 

In the dim-lit stable the mother mild   
Looked with holy eyes on her child,   
Cradled him close to her heart and smiled;   
Kingly purple nor crown had he,   
Never a trapping of royalty;   
But Mary saw that the baby's head   
With a slender nimbus was garlanded.   
  
Speechless her joy as she watched him there,   
Forgetful of pain and grief and care,   
And every thought in her soul was a prayer;   
While under the dome of the desert sky   
The Kings of the East from afar drew nigh,   
And the great white star that was guide to them   
Kept ward o'er the manger of Bethlehem.

**“Into the Darkest Hour”**

It was a time like this,  
War & tumult of war,  
a horror in the air.  
Hungry yawned the abyss-  
and yet there came the star  
and the child most wonderfully there.

It was a time like this  
of fear & lust for power,  
license & greed and blight-  
and yet the Prince of bliss  
came into the darkest hour  
in quiet & silent light.

And in a time like this  
how celebrate his birth  
when all things fall apart?  
Ah! Wonderful it is  
with no room on the earth  
the stable is our heart.

**“Look Up!” Dietrich Bonhoeffer**

Look up, you whose gaze is fixed on this earth,

who are spellbound by the little events and changes on the face of the earth.

Look up, you who have turned away from heaven disappointed.

Look up, you whose eyes are heavy with tears

and who are heavy and who are crying...

Look up, you who, burdened with guilt, cannot lift your eyes.

Look up, your redemption is drawing near.

Something from what you see daily will happen.

Just be aware, be watchful, wait just another short moment.

Wait and something quite new will break over you: God will come.

**“Refugee” Malcolm Guite**

We think of him as safe beneath the steeple, Or cosy in a crib beside the font, But he is with a million displaced people On the long road of weariness and want.

For even as we sing our final carol His family is up and on that road, Fleeing the wrath of someone else’s quarrel, Glancing behind and shouldering their load.

Whilst Herod rages still from his dark tower Christ clings to Mary, fingers tightly curled, The lambs are slaughtered by the men of power, And death squads spread their curse across the world.

But every Herod dies, and comes alone To stand before the throne.