



The Nativity at night in 1490 by Dutch artist Geertgen tot Sint Jans (little Gerard of the brethren of Saint John.)

Another painting which hangs on my own wall – a copy of course.

This painting is quite small and very charming with an almost naïve quality.

Some of the figures are out of scale and the use of dark and light could almost be a forerunner to Caravaggio's chiaroscuro technique. 150 years later

The Brightest light in this picture is the Christ child – the light coming into the world. The Angel visiting the shepherds on the hill out shines their campfire but the baby in the manger outshines everything else and rays of light emanate from him.

It is thought that the painting is loosely based on the description of a dream or vision by the 14<sup>th</sup> century mystic, Bridget of Sweden, who saw the baby Jesus radiating a light brighter than any other. The baby is nevertheless small and helpless, laying naked on a bed of straw, emphasising the mystery and wonder of the incarnation. The next time he will lay naked and helpless is after he is taken down from the cross. The light shining in the darkness of night at his birth contrasts with the darkness befalling the earth at noon at His crucifixion. There is an adoring look on Mary's face, her hands, in a gesture of prayer, do not touch him. He is attended by Angels and kept warm by the breath of the animals all looking on in wonder; nobody touching.

Barely visible in the manger is a corn sheaf (you'll have to take my word for it) an allusion to 'the bread of life' and the Eucharist.

**WHAT HAS COME INTO BEING IN HIM WAS LIFE, AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF ALL PEOPLE. THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS, AND THE DARKNESS DID NOT OVERCOME IT.**

**THE TRUE LIGHT, WHICH ENLIGHTENS EVERYONE, WAS COMING INTO THE WORLD.**

*John 1. 4-5 & 9*

Mother of Christ  
Light in all darkness  
Shelter him  
Our flame of love

And in our times  
of dread and nightmare  
let him be our dream  
of comfort

And in our times  
Of physical pain and suffering  
Let him be our healer.

And in our times  
Of separation from God  
And from one another  
Let him be our communion