

The Holy Nights Journal
Offering a Pathway of Contemplation and Journaling
through the Holy Nights of Christmas
leading into the Year 2023
referencing the MidnightStar Pictures .



Alan Thewless

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*Behold, I stand at the door, and knock:
If any man hear my voice,
and open the door, I will come in to him,
and will sup with him, and he with me.*

Book of Revelations 3:20

Introduction

*For the Grail was the crown of blessing, the fullness of earth's delight,
And Its joys I right well may liken to the glories of Heaven's height!*

from Book 5 of Wolfram von Eschenbach's 'Parzival' – Jessie L. Weston translation

Writing the Holy Night Journal is always an embarkation, a journey that has tones of expectation and of hope. Accompanying this is the natural uncertainty that must always attend us when we venture into something new. Its relationship to contemporary times, both temporal and in the domain of spiritual challenges, carries a feeling of responsibility; this is especially true in relation to the humanly complex nature of the present world situation. How such things are accompanied by cosmic events that resonate within the graces of a festively sacred time means also some trepidation on the part of the writer in relation to speaking of things that are not easy. I especially ask the reader to bear with me in relation to these things and hold them in context with the wonder that prevails through the great spiritual well-spring that is the Holy Nights.

The miracle of spiritual/social rebirth that stirs our hearts at Christmastide shines through the 'veil' in the human being that, in the tread of everyday life, can so easily conceal from us the sense of our truer Self. Delicately we lift the veil and we are in the realm of the stable; but this is no outer picture. Not even the greatest artists have been able to render it though the attempts themselves have built the foundations of culture. We are in the space of the heart itself and in this space the cosmic and the human meet.

As remarked upon in the introduction to last year's Journal: in recent years, and increasingly, the momentum of change has taken hold of our lives. Technological possibilities are advanced more rigorously than at any other time in human history and have certainly brought a great many challenges amidst their certain benefits. Beyond this, however, the pace of change has entered virtually all areas of life, this having been fueled by global medical subjects that have opened up a Pandora's box of cultural, political, economic, moral and scientific issues.

The resulting heavy impact on individual lives has often been devastating.

Within the turmoil of international conflicts and economic strife; within big business agendas that invade the organs of society that were formed as safeguards for human rights; within the chaos of sectarian viewpoints and the manufacturing of 'truths' that are geared more to power plays than to the spirit of Truth itself, the human

being can feel nothing less than embattlement. In all of this, which by its nature appears shadowlike and oppressive, we can easily wonder how to hold ourselves upright and effective, in tune with purpose and meaning. The overall impress upon the soul can so easily be one of disempowerment. Loss of ease is perhaps the hallmark of our growing humanity that feels for the desperate plight of those, so many, who live on the knife-edge of starvation or the constant threat of annihilation through tools of war. However, it is also the very fabric of our human world that seems loosened and under threat in present times and this goes beyond what is even personal as it pertains to the Earth itself and the culture of humanness.

At the core of this, the subject of human freedom and human control is perhaps the most acute dilemma when we are able to consider, in essence, what is to become of the qualities of humanness that we aspire towards and revere, that will enable our planet to shine in the cosmos as home for a noble and loving humanity. When considering these qualities of humanness in more detail we may reflect upon what is beautifully brought towards us by the good spirits who have rendered, through the ages, the daily virtues of the Twelve Holy Nights that reveal the true image and potential of the Human Being.

It is not easy to begin with these things as introduction to this year's Holy Nights Journal. Yet with our attempts to follow the cosmos of stars and planets in present times, and in this sacred period, it is not possible to avoid speaking of the hardships that surround us, even as they surrounded the simple stable and the town of Bethlehem at the moment of the Christ Child's birth. In the strangest of ways, the oppressive conditions that surround us call forth, as if by a universal law, an inner response that has within it a power not only to overcome but also a power to engage infinitely more deeply with the potential of our humanity. Even there is the sense that the spiritual world comes closer to us the more that outer circumstance and external might attempts to snuff out our connection to all things existing outside the dictates of hardened intellectual materialism. We are indeed accompanied at all times and in all situations by divine beings who companion humanity's progress through the ages. It is only the bestowal of the gifts of individual choice and freedom on the human being that prevents the direct intervention of these beings in areas that work against humanity. In the greater context of human development this aspect is most significant.

Similarly, the accompaniment of the divine beings, who stand behind the starry firmament, is present in the working of the stars and planets, but here too, in the majesty of the night sky there is at first silence. In relation to human development, spiritual being must accommodate human freedom and must be approached freely: their graces and revelations awaiting the approach the fire of our interest. In the divine order of things how could it be different when the unique gift of freedom is bestowed on us? The following well-known words of Rudolf Steiner

embrace so finely the dignity of this spiritual/human relationship with the world of the stars in the age of freedom:

*The stars spoke once to Man
It is world destiny that they are silent now
To be aware of the silence is pain for Earthly Man
But in the deepening silence ripens
What Man speaks to the stars
To be aware of this speaking can become strength for
Spirit Man.*

-----Rudolf Steiner

At the end of the Holy Nights last year, at a time resonant with our present December, Saturn stood directly opposite to its location at the moment of Christ's sacrifice on the hill of Golgotha. In this way we see a context to the intensities of our present times. Saturn, the planet of historic conscience, was witnessing the event on which Earth and Humanity would make full turn, would find once more alignment with spiritual strength and vitality albeit through the greatest and most injuring event that the Earth had witnessed.

We now look at a period where Pluto is approaching a similar region, opposite to Saturn at the above event, and although Pluto will not be directly opposite until the 2030's we must consider that the period ahead is one that is crucial for the mission of human beings on the Earth and will involve intensity and trial. A crucial period that, of necessity, the human being must face as we enter the next phase of human unfolding. The periods of the Holy Nights will become ever more potent as we endeavor to sense our close relationship with those good spirits who accompany the human journey. The cosmic script, that we here make beginning attempts to discern, will gradually become more familiar to human beings for it is part of the bridge-building between the microcosmic human and the cosmic human which carries the true image of the Self and is involved in all aspects of true knowledge, healing and love: the very qualities representative of our human stature.

The stories of the Grail, often alluded to in these Journals, belong to the tradition of the great Romances of the Middle Ages. As legends they hail from a time before the modern age, when certain human beings could receive pure 'pictures' of the soul's journey towards grace and illumination. In this sense, before the age of materialism began, we have through certain of these stories, notably those of Wolfram von Eschenbach and Chretien de Troyes, intimations of the great heritage that belongs timelessly to the human being in relation to kinship between Christ, the World of the Stars and Planets, and the Spirit within us that quests for Knowledge of the True Self and true Knowledge of the World.

As we embark upon the adventure of our present Holy Nights, and open our hearts to the Truths that can speak within us, may they help us to be faithful to our times, to those around us, and to the working of the Spirits who will be our guides. In this way the Holy Nights will increasingly be a vital time for human beings, a time of deepest renewal helping to restore within the soul sources of Light, Life and Love.

*These Holy Nights stand as though established
out of the wise, hidden depths of the human soul,
as if to say:
Experience the Christ Festival in all its profundity;
but then plunge during the Holy Nights
into the Holiest Mysteries of the Cosmos;
and this means
into the universal land whence Christ descended to the earth.”*

Rudolf Steiner, 21 December 1911

Let's make a start

Alan Thewless



This journal owes its existence to the many friends and colleagues who have supported it over the years offering their practical help, valuable suggestions and heartfelt encouragement; to them, their friendship and goodwill it is dedicated.

With special thanks to my wife, Janice Balaskas and to Christine Huston for advices and support.

What are the Holy Nights?

The holy city of Jerusalem had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Book of Revelations 12 and 13

In the West we think of the year's course in terms of the division of the Sun's cycle into 12; each portion being a month and resonant with the journey of the Sun through the twelve signs of the zodiac. However, the word month which comes from the word 'Moneth,' meaning a round of the Moon, reflects a different comprehension of measure and one that relates solely to the lunar cycle. In following the measure of time through the cycles of the Moon (29.5 days), the rounds of the Moon, having completed 12, are short of the solar year by nearly 12 days ($12 \times 29.5 \text{ days} = 354 \text{ days}$, $354 \text{ days} + 12 \text{ days} = 366 \text{ days}$). In ancient tradition these twelve days were seen as something outside of the regular routine of life and course of time. They begin on December 24th/25th, three days after the Winter Solstice and the day when the Sun is just beginning to wrest itself from the grip of Winter by rising noticeably northwards in the East. This is the moment when we know with confidence that the light will return. Here we see the coming together of sublime Mysteries at the heart of Christianity.

The Twelve Holy Days and Nights were treated as festive and sacred, giving opportunities for reflection and contemplation as well as being highly valued for taking stock of things and planning for the coming year. Furthermore, they were experienced as a time to connect with the meaning and intrinsic value of life wherein Human Beings could feel close to the light-filled Elemental Powers stirring in the Earth, and experience an affinity with the majesty of the Heavens and an affinity also with the Hierarchies who fill space and time without limit, and yet touch each heart with profound intimacy.

These Twelve Days and their sublime Nights have been a treasured heritage throughout the centuries and are needed, perhaps even more urgently in present times. As a good night's rest can bring renewed strength to a tired body, so do these Holy Days and Nights give their restorative benison to the Soul and Spirit when we allow ourselves to feel their grace and their direction.

Steps for Working with the Holy Nights Journaling

Outline

The focus of the Holy Nights Journal is the sequence of star-pictures and commentaries formed for midnight on each of the Holy Nights. The evening activities center on building a relationship to the starry heavens above and below, a relationship that is an appreciation of the unique gifts made present to us by the cosmos on each night. Our attempt here is to build a sense for the Sun shining through the Earth and how, in relation to this, we stand in a gesture of offering to the surrounding cosmos of planets above and below.

The inclusion of the Heliocentric perspective, though at first seemingly overcomplicated, in reality supplements and deepens what is brought from the Geocentric view, bringing towards us a sense of universal principles at work each day and each night. These charts aim to provide an impression of the Earth within the cosmos of stars and planets as seen from the Sun: a perspective that bears a relationship to healing potentials. Having taken these star-pictures and their accompanying commentaries into sleep, the experiences of the nighttime can be brought into the journaling of the following morning alongside some general guidance for journaling. Bearing in mind the familiar idea that each Holy Night refers to an unfolding month in the year ahead, the inner work suggested above, and the accompanying discipline of journaling, may provide an important preparation akin to planting seeds that may germinate in the upcoming year. The placing of this within the context of the Midnight Stars of the Holy Nights helps us also in relation to that Great Work which, small step by small step, builds the Rainbow Bridge of soul between the earthly world and the universe of the Stars, connecting our isolated existence to one of companionship with Universal Being.

The general guidance that forms parts of the journaling work includes the following:

- The dedication for the day to come;
- The relationship of the dedication to the corresponding month of the preceding year and the year to come.
- The virtue and its opposite, related to the day and the month that it is related to.

The cosmic correspondences that are drawn from the accompanying star-charts are presented in a spirit of offering and hopefully inspire further contemplation in themselves over and beyond the general setting. For those already familiar with discernment within the realm of star-correspondences, the commentaries may of course be broadened further.

Suggestions for Working with the Holy Nights

A reading of the whole journal is highly recommended beforehand - or at least a forward reading whenever the opportunity arises. This is because of the natural dynamic that exists where the time leading up to a particular event in the stars is just as important as the day of the event itself. Do what you can here and don't be put off if this cannot happen.

The Evening of Christmas Eve

Create a quiet space. Contemplate the dedication for the day and read the Gospel of St. Luke 2:1-19. Follow the last four steps noted in the Evening section.

The Holy Nights, Days and Evenings

Morning

- * Upon waking, bring to mind the subtle impressions from your sojourn in sleep. Recall key words relating to dreams, thoughts, mood elements, etc. and affirm your gratitude for being awake within the temple of your body and for the adventures and discoveries that the day may bring.
- * Prepare a sacred quiet space where you can begin to contemplate the Holy Nights Journal work. The elements of warmth, light, space for movement and instruments to write or draw with should be present. A separate notebook for your personal journaling will be helpful or the blank pages within this journal may be used.
- * Sit quietly for a few moments to gain attentiveness. Bring to mind impressions from sleep and dream, including those from the star-pictures and correspondence taken into sleep. If details do not come readily to mind in memory, recall any impressions, color moods, emerging thoughts, questions or feeling-gestures. Render these artistically through drawing, writing or movement, etc. Pastels are a very good medium to work with in order to render color impressions.
- * Recollect the month of the year passing away that corresponds with the day and write down your key reflections: the things that were formative for you in that month. Similarly, hold in mindfulness the corresponding month to come. You may have plans already in place for that month.
- * Contemplate the section of the journal listing the virtue and the dedication for the day. Prepare to carry an awareness of these through the course of the day as portals for self-knowledge.

- * Begin any meditative or devotional work that is already a part of your morning routine.
- * As you enter into the day, try to keep your journal close by so that it can be a reminder of the day's importance and so that you can record emerging thoughts, inspirations, intuitions or events of meaning that may come to you. For more convenience, when out and about, a pocket note book can be useful.

Evening

- * Within the context of your quiet space, review the day's experiences and recall carefully any new elements, insights and areas of self knowledge that are arising. Bring these together into a comprehensive form in your journaling. This may be offered to your Angel in the night ahead.
- * Facing Southwards, take the star-picture for the Midnight Hour, sense the Spiritual Sun shining through the Earth and sense the positions of all the planets. (Please note that you don't necessarily have to stay up till midnight; this exercise can be done beforehand—though on Christmas Eve and New Year's Eve being awake at midnight is important.)
- * Using the Heliocentric chart, build an imaginative appreciation by picturing the cosmos as seen from the Sun.
- * Read the accompanying star-correspondence.
- * Lastly, and with a sense of gratitude for what has arisen during the course of your day, take a moment to send loving thoughts and prayers to the places (and the individuals) in the world where these are most needed.

Special note regarding use of the Holy Nights Journal throughout the year

As each of the Holy Nights references a month in the forthcoming year, it has been found that the star charts and their accompanying commentaries, plus the personal journaling notes that have been taken, give valuable material for further study and insight as the year progresses. For this reason you are invited to keep your journal close to hand throughout the months of 2023, to reflect on the journal commentaries and what you have written, and to enter additional notes as the months unfold.

As mentioned in the Journal of 2020/21, at the time of the Great Conjunction, we will maintain a special study on Epiphany morning that connects us with the Great Conjunction, the meeting of Saturn and Jupiter that occurred on December 21, 2020 and which references the present Saturn-Jupiter cycle and its importance for the years 2020 to 2040.

*General notes regarding the Holy Nights Star Charts
and Key to Zodiacal and Planetary Symbols*

The charts used in this journal refer to the zodiacal constellations of stars and, where necessary, commentary references show the distinction between the unequal boundaries of the constellations, as used since the time of Ptolemy (circa AD 100 to 170), and the equal boundaries whose designations originated from earlier Babylonian times. As an example we can note that Virgo is an extremely large constellation and Libra very small, in the unequal designations. Both Equal and Unequal Constellations are marked on the charts; the boundaries of Equal constellations are marked by solid lines with circles on top, and those of the Unequal constellations are marked with broken lines. With regard to the character of planetary positions I refer primarily to the unequal zodiac. The included charts are drawn according to Eastern Standard Time (USA East Coast), which is 5:00 hours earlier than Universal Time. However, the chart pictures are good for midnight in any location with the proviso that, for reasons of fine-tuning, we give attention to the Moon's position in the Geocentric charts which, because of her rapid movements, varies by some degrees as we change time zones. In the cases where this fine-tuning is necessary mention will be made in the daily commentaries.

As noted, while the inclusion of the Heliocentric perspective at first seems overcomplicated, in reality it supplements and deepens what is brought in from the Geocentric view, bringing towards us a greater sense of universal principles at work each day and each night.

For those less familiar with the symbols used for the constellations of the zodiac and the planets I have drawn the key below which may be used as a reference. The star charts in themselves are kept quite simple in order to provide a non-technical picture, an impression that can readily be approached. A full star chart could contain an incredible wealth of information and data, all necessary for delving into the universe of significance and meaning incorporated into a single view of the heavens that the chart embraces. Indeed a great deal could be written about one star chart alone. However, in this journal there is a simpler offering which may yet still significantly aid the traveler in these realms.

