



## *Slow Down and Welcome Christmas*

"The Christmas spirit comes on me more slowly than it used to," writes Joan Mills, a mother of three children, in her book *Christmas Coming*. "But it comes, it comes. Middle-aged (most of the time) and jaded (some of the time), I complain of plastic sentiment, days too brief, bones too weary. Scrooge stands at my elbow muttering, "Bah!" and "Humbug!" as I total the bills. But when I acknowledge the child I once was (and still am, somewhere within), the spirit of Christmas irresistibly descends."

"For Christmas is truly for children those we have, and those we have been ourselves. It is the keeping-place for memories of our age in lovely ritual and simplicities.

I'm tired," I say fretfully. "There's just too much to do! Must we make so much of Christmas?" "Yes!" they say flatly.

"But bayberry, pine and cinnamon scent the shadowed room. Snow lies in quiet beauty outside. I hear someone downstairs turning on the tree lights while another admires. I lie very still in the dark. From the church in the village on the far side of the woods, carillon notes fall faint and sweet on winter clear air.

"Silent night," my heart repeats softly. Holy night. All is calm All is bright.

"As I take the stairs lightly going down, no bones weary now, my whole self is thankful; once again, I am flooded with the certainty (call it faith) that there's goodness in the world, and love endures."



## *Divinity Clothed with Dust*

It is said that Henry David Thoreau once spent a whole day in Walden Pond up to his neck in the water. His idea was to see and experience the world as a frog sees it. But Thoreau did not become a frog!

"Sesame Street" is closer to the Christmas story. They had a skit one time of the old fairy tale where the beautiful princess kisses an ugly frog and the frog becomes a handsome prince. In the Sesame Street telling, however, the princess kissed the frog, whereupon she turned into a frog herself.

That is closer to what we celebrate at Christmas. God did not swoop down and survey the human situation from a safe distance. God emptied himself. He lay aside his celestial robes to don the simple raiment of a man. Divinity clothed itself with our dust!