

THE DAWN OF TOMORROW

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Legends Tell About Hymn

Stories and legends surround most of the modern ways of celebrating Christmas — and sometimes there is more than one version of a story — such as the story of "Silent Night" and how the song came to be written.

Joseph Mohr, village priest of Hallein, Austria, wrote the words, and his organist wrote the music, probably adapted from a melody by Michael Haydn. On this point, most sources seem to be agreed.

What inspired Father Mohr to write the words is another story — or another two stories.

One version, say researchers for The Book of Knowledge, is that Father Mohr was called out into the snow on Christmas Eve of 1818, to bless a newly born baby in the home of one of his poorest parishioners.

He was so filled with the spirit of the season and the simple beauty of the mother and infant that when he returned to his study he wrote the poem, "Silent Night." Before Christmas Day was over, his organist had written the music.

Other versions have it that the church organ had broken down (impaired by mice, one story says), and the people were saddened because there would be no music for Christmas Day. Shortly before Christmas, Father Mohr wrote his poem and Organist Gruber the music.

At midnight mass, the people sang "Silent Night" — with a guitar accompaniment.

WHAT STAR IS THIS?

What star is this, with beams so bright,
Which shames the sun's less radiant light?
It shines to announce a new-born King,
Glad tidings of our God to bring.

'Tis now fulfilled with God decreed,
"From Jacob shall a star proceed."
And lo! the Eastern sages stand,
To head in heaven the Lord's command.

While outward signs the star displays,
And inward light the Lord conveys,
And urges them, with forces benign,
To seek the giver of the sign.

True love can brook no dull delay,
Nor toil, nor dangers stop their way:
Home, kindred, fatherland, and all,
They leave at once, at God's high call.

O Jesus, while the Star of Grace
Invites us now to seek Thy face,
May we no more that grace repel,
Or quench that light that shines so well!

To God the Father, God the Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One,
May every tongue and nation raise
An endless song of thankful praise.

From the Latin;

Tr. by J. Chandler, 1806-1876

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