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From: Mary Craig [mcraigmin@bellsouth.net]
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To: kroy-pvt@kroytech.com
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Mary Craig Ministries

December 2009

The year was 1997. Even then, we had been celebrating Christmas at Craighouse with a Christmas dinner followed by caroling in the streets for some four years.

We approached our last house Men, women, and children, thirty in all, walked the streets of Ft. Lauderdale with the trumpet, the trombone, the tambourines, and the voices of Christmas. Grouping ourselves in a huddle, we made our selection. The carols of Christmas filled the air, testifying to our neighbors the announcement that Jesus Christ, God's final Word, has come.

Moved by the words and the sudden trueness of our voices, we sang with increasing boldness and beauty. Two thousand Christmases became real to us as we stood there in the long tradition of carolers carrying to the world the joy of Jesus' birth.

Carols. We love them for the simplicity of their musical form. We love them for the depth of their message, originally written to impart spiritual truth to a people primarily illiterate. In early usage, the word *carol* seems to have been synonymous with dance as well as song. Many are written with the lilt of the dance. The medieval ring dance was known as the *carole*. Its simple form alternated between verse and refrain, solo singer and dancer. The Church in the Middle Ages suppressed the dancing, and the Protestant Reformation suppressed the carol itself; but neither could suppress for long the popularity of the carol's clear affinity with other forms of folk songs. Thus carol singing revived in the eighteenth century as old carols began to be rediscovered and new ones composed.

The French carol tradition brought us a rich source of Christmas music based on the *noel*. Developed late in the fifteenth century, the *noel* was exclusively connected with Christmas.

Carols cover a spectrum of mood ranging from the exuberance of "We wish You a Merry Christmas" to the gentle lullaby of "Silent Night." This ancient, unalterable music of the people announces with clarity the approaching Day of Christ's Birth celebration with all the expectation of the coming of a King.

I wonder: **Do we approach Christmas with the amazement of those first angels announcing with song that first advent?** Two thousand years ago the hills around Bethlehem echoed with angelic praises to God. Shepherds carried with them these songs of rejoicing. And so, people the world over still sing with joy their wonder at the love of God in the message of Christmas.

*And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude
Of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, good will toward men.
Luke 2.13, 14*

Carols. Simple. Direct. We love them for their melodies and universal appeal to young and old, rich and poor, tribe and nation. They remind us of family visits and cozy gatherings; timeless tunes telling of the Savior we have come to know. Keep them in your celebration of the Savior's Birth.

This year we will meet again at Craighouse® on Sunday December 20th 6:00 p.m. for a Christmas dinner and caroling in the streets. Once again, strolling singers will offer with joy the songs of our hearts and the Word of our faith. Those listening at windows and in doorways will hear with love of the Love that sent Jesus. Every home without a Bible will receive one that they might have within their home the Word of which we sing. Those with hearts to receive will hear the testimony of the witness as some one lingers to share our faith as the carols fade into the night air. "Joy to the World," "tidings of comfort and joy," "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel," live in us today.

Merry.
Christmas



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