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Come and See

Luke 2:15

Christmas has become for most of us a noisy and cluttered time. But Luke invites us to go back to that night in Bethlehem when everything became quiet.

Frederick Buechner once described the meaning of this journey by comparing it to the experience of an audience of college students watching a movie. It was the Italian film *La Dolce Vita*. In the opening scene a helicopter is flying slowly and not very high above the ground. Hanging down from the helicopter in a kind of halter is the life-size statue of a man dressed in robes with his arms outstretched so that he looks almost as if he is flying by himself.

The statue is flown over a field where some farmers are plowing in their tractors. These men become excited by this unusual sight and they stop the tractors and climb up on the seats waving and yelling. Then one farmer recognizes who the statue represents and shouts in Italian, "Hey, it's Jesus!"

The statue continues its journey until it reaches the outskirts of Rome. There it passes over a building which has a swimming pool on the roof. A group of young women are sunbathing around the pool. They, too, notice the strange sight of the statue being hauled by a helicopter. Like the farmers in the field they begin to wave. But the sight of the sunbathers attracts the special attention of the young men who are flying the copter. They circle back to the building and hover over the pool.

They call out to the young women over the roar of the engine in an effort to get their phone numbers. They explain that they are taking the statue to the Vatican and they can return soon.

While all this is happening on the screen the students in the audience are roaring with laughter at the incongruity of the situation. On the one hand there is the sacred statue dangling from the sky. On the other hand are the profane young Italians flirting with one another. As the audience laughs there can be no doubt at whose expense the laughter comes.

When the helicopter pulls away for the final leg of the journey the camera zooms in on the statue. Suddenly the screen is nearly filled with the bearded face of Jesus. At that moment the laughter in the theater stopped. Something about the face on the screen had the power to reduce the audience to silence. The students remained in silence for several minutes. It was as if they knew somewhere deep within themselves that the face on the screen was the One to whom they belonged.

Our journey of faith is like that. In the midst of the noise and distractions of our lives the Christ child breaks in unannounced. We are then confronted with the face which causes us to be still.

That's what happened to the shepherds on that first Christmas. The chaos of their lives was interrupted by the singing of angels and they were off to see this strange new sight, saying, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing... which the Lord has made known to us (Luke 2:15)."

This was the experience of the wise men who followed Jesus' star. They traveled long and far just to see that face.

Luke invites us to make the same journey. He beckons us to come and see the face of the One who has the ultimate claim on our lives. We will find him in the silence of Bethlehem. O come let us adore him.