

DATED CHRISTMAS POEMS

CHRISTMAS 1983

Cruise deterring
Over Greenham
Star exploding
Over Bethl'hem

Warning
Guiding
Wise Men

To a Woman
In a shed
By an Inn

To a Woman
In a tent
By a fence

Glory on high
And peace on earth
Weapons alert
The Child asleep

Austin cp

CHRISTMAS 1984

There are babies in the windows
Of each department store
There are babies at the windows
Demanding more and more

But the babies in the windows
Are plastic wood or granite
Whilst the babies at the windows
Are living and incarnate

There are mothers in the windows
Acting their sculptured parts
There are mothers at the windows
Pondering in their hearts

Who is being exploited
Is very hard to say
It will take more to see it righted
Than cards on Christmas Day

Passionist Inner City Mission
Liverpool
Christmas 1984

STAR WARS

Manmade star
Road to war
Beth'lem star
Peace from afar

Manmade star
Fool's delight
Beth'lem star
Wisdom's delight

Manmade star
Death on earth
Beth'lem star
Behold a birth

Passionist Inner City Mission
Christmas 1985

SOVEREIGNTY

Cry, God's Baby,
Wise man now learns
To come to terms,
With national dreams of
Sovereignty.

Smile, God's Baby,
Wise woman knows,
'Midst winter's snows,
The war-torn curse of
Sovereignty.

Laugh, God's Baby,
Clap your hands,
A red robin lands
On the burnt-out ash of
Sovereignty.

Christmas 1991

Austin cp

THE CHRISTMAS STORY 1992

Tell us Mary that night's story
Of uneasy peace and puzzling glory
Well see I was far from home
In a town they said belonging to Rome

Joseph went out to seek the midwife
Human bridge from womb to life
Back he came with a puzzled face
Going on and on about the human race

He said they said there's no one about
We've all ashopping had to go out
But if you care to leave a message
In a twinkle of a star in heavenly passage
We'll get back to you when we come in
Don't forget the number of the Inn

Never mind my love I replied very tenderly
What's two short hours perceived eternally
So we settled down and the baby came
They never got back to their mortal shame

Dancing shepherds arrived around two
Chanting a chorus we're all with you
We laughed bathed and fed the baby
And fell asleep cradled in eternity

Austin Smith cp

CHRISTMAS IS FOR CHILDREN?

I hear you, child, above chattering rifles,
for rescue crying
I see you, child, behind iron bars,
for freedom appealing
I smell you, child, in dirty swaddling,
for caring longing
I touch you, child, on pot-holed streets,
for tenderness begging
I taste you, child, in your sweet bitterness,
for feeding aching.

Five wounds, my little one,
Before childhood's begun ~
Experiencing suffering
In your very birthing ~
Through the long yearning year
You've caused us many a tear ~
Beneath a wandering star I say sorry
We have donated to a volunteer lorry.

Christmas 1994

Austin Smith CP

PEACE!

PEACE PROCESSED

Held in my arms a sleeping child,
heard a bird sing in a roofless house,
saw two strangers embrace on a windy street,
spotted a discarded gun in a city gutter,
watched a smile break on a tear-streaked face.

(All moments of deep tranquillity,
born in some undefined eternity,
free from any twisted complexity,
glimpses of a surprised humanity.)

The whole world from nowhere gathered
and a voice from somewhere whispered,
peace I give you, peace is now bequested!

Christmas 1995

Austin Smith CP

CHRISTMAS CHILD

Oval shaped,
almond-like,
your face
haunts me,
as you turn to me
in silent slow-motion,
wide eyes
wondering,
bewildered,
caught on camera,
pan-piled carts,
tattered humanity,
wisps of smoke
rising into a blue sky,
your backdrop;
unfleshed shoulders
a coat hanger for
a borrowed,
unfitted and unfitting,
western of course,
handed-down jacket,
thus your swaddling;
carried, then tottering,
tottering, then carried,
to somewhere
to be counted,
longing for
a homing star
to guide you to
a strawed cot,
in a shed shared
with the animals
and, perhaps,
a fostering.
Welcome, little one,
to human journeying,
there can be
better roads,
honestly.

PEACE!

MAYBE

If a video there had been
would that late night scene
bring us more clearly the cry
of the baby `neath an eastern sky,
who grew to say wisdom things
despising the power of kings?

If a video there had been
would that late night scene
make earth rest more safely,
the birds sing more securely,
would we now endow all humanity
with equality born in eternity?

And would all the world have a home
as we question a millennium dome?

Peace and Joy!

HIS THIRTY-THIRD BIRTHDAY PARTY

As usual dancing, song and talk,
Proud I am, seems so long ago,
Memories cascade and flow,
Seeing him, wordless, reach for me,
A baby, trying to sing and walk.

They asked, always do, for the tale,
Creation becomes kitchen size,
I treasure my infinite prize,
Questions, laughing, angels singing,
I tell again the story never stale.

He's asleep, I'm with mother memories.
Each year, this night, a tear I shed,
Remembering, it was to Egypt we fled,
Refugees, Joseph, the child, and back home
Mothers cradling slaughtered babies.

Anyway peace, love, harmony, tonight,
And happiness too; "No destiny in misery
And no sinfulness in simple jollity!"
He called over to Peter as we danced.
The stars smiled, the sky went bright.

TIME

"What, then, is time?" Augustine asks,
"I know well enough what it is,
"Provided nobody asks; but if I am asked
"What it is and try to explain
"I have to say, it's all in vain."

Yesterday was, today is,
What becomes will be.
You had, they tell me,
Thirty three of two thousand years
Of joy and sorrow, anger and tears.

There was, they also tell me,
A timeless 'before' and 'after'.
This timelessness I know is vital.
Yet the thirty three will do for me
From the stable to the hanging tree.

I so treasure and keep revisiting,
Day by day, your incarnation story
Of love and healing, wonder and sorrow,
Scattering seeds, your idea, forever falling
On two thousand years of mixed reaping.

So, from baby time, I have waited
For the historic donkey and
Each year, along she comes,
Now head up, now head down,
Trot, trotting to Bethlehem town

Then beyond all moments of our time
Into creation values I weakly mime.

Happy Christmas and New Year!

1999 2000

Austin

A STAR – A DONKEY – A CHILD

I know it's not so simple, no need to remind me

Still heaven and earth
And all creation

~ A star shining
A donkey munching
A child sleeping ~

Call out, indeed demand,
Profound reverence
Respect and goodwill
So begins peace on earth
And glory in the highest.

Christmas 2004

Father Austin CP

FRIENDS KEEP ON SAYING

Friends keep on saying
A new start is needed
Then in the light of a star
A mysterious voice says
I have given you one each
Year
A baby called word made flesh
Named more simply
Jesus

Why can't we take him at this word?
Peace on earth

Let the bombs rot
Talk it out
Many say that's too simple
I don't know
Give it a try

Austin

2007

NON-DATED CHRISTMAS POEMS

A WORD IN YOUR EAR

In the beginning was the word –

Faxes for words
Mobiles for words
Not to mention
Our computers
And television.

A baby giggling
His central heating
A donkey an ass some straw
In the cold of the night
And God said there's my word.

Angels and saints
Dancing and laughing
Till archangel shouted
Get your hymn books out
In harmony PEACE they sang.

Mary leaned over to Joseph
I preferred the chaotic happiness
Joseph shrugged and smiled
There's always someone
Who can't cope with untidiness.

So the first night came to an end.

Father Austin CP

THREE BABIES

Sunken-cheek baby
Dying in desert dust,
Wide-eyed baby
Imploring Mother.

Sunken-cheek baby
Bombers zoom into the night.

Mystery baby
Laughing with a donkey
Crying in the night.
Reaching for mother.

Angels dance on the clouds
To songs of peace on earth.

A baby I know
Waving to me
Lovingly with a hand
Designed in eternity

May you never know hunger
May you never feel violence.

Father Austin CP

GOOD FRIDAY CHRISTMAS

Did Jesus' mother
Search out Judas' mother
Simply to say,
"Now, just leave it. Peace!"
Did she from time to time,
Say sadly,
"I wish Joseph was here"
Did Magdalen say
To Jesus' Disciples
"You should be ashamed"
Did Pilate have a sleepless night
Saying over and over again,
"But I did wash my hands"
And did a child now grown up
Who with others came to him
Simply say, "Can't make this out."

With love and best wishes

Father Austin CP

A LETTER TO MARY

I can't make my birthday
This year –
So many things going on
No need to say it brings a tear
In your eye as in mine
Times change
Joseph gone
Remember
How you both held me
Between you
As we sang and danced
And Joseph
Moved
A loose slate
To let a star shine through –
Must mend that slate –
I'll believe it when I see it -
More laughter
So much laughter always
John will get this to you
As he has always done
He really knows love's meaning.
Love
Jesus

Austin CP

RUSSIAN CHRISTMAS

Your breathing, I hear,
Small cry, perhaps,
Buried year by year,
Beneath the absurd
Rubble of our fear,
Our hopes collapsing
On you in a despair,
Without foundation,
Except the closed ear
To that possible peace
You were born to declare,
If only we would shed
A reconciling tear
Over the smoking ruins
Of a world you hold so dear
And which now we embrace,
When disaster draws near
To stress our shared humanity
And direct our cosmic career
Into an effort of mutual love,
As tenderly, sorrow hard to bear,
Rescued by starlight, in a manger,
With an infinite care,
We lay you down to sleep.

Peace and Love !

Austin cp

After millions of years
Down tumbled the wall,
Between Time and Eternity,
Smashed by a baby's love
In the protective womb of
A beautiful girl,
No more than a child,
Who, in the wall's breach,
Danced a 'pas de deux'
With human and divine love
And a 'corps-de-ballet' of
Shepherds,
Wise men,
Camels,
Sheep,
Red and white stars
And riff-raff,
(The latter to be known historically as
Scroungers,
Bums,
Inadequates,
Undeserving,
Homeless,
Benefitless),
Balanced on tireless toes.
Believing
The dance done,
We bricked up the wall,
Remembering walls brought security
And, quite simply, we couldn't
Stand the eternal draught.
It's much neater with walls,
You know where you are,
And even better,
Where God is –
In heaven
And not
In the backyard.
But the Angels split
Their celestial sides with laughter
And went on singing through the night,
"Peace on Earth,"
"Glory in the Heavens,"
As the young girl danced
And the baby kept on knocking
Our silly bricks away.
A very difficult child
In need of parental control,
A secure family life,
Providing for a safe future!

With Love and Peace,

Austin cp

THE CHRISTMAS SPY

I'll tell you a story,
Publish it without hesitancy,
Ignore all institutional secrecy,
And downright worldly treachery
With too much theological complexity –
All about human glory.

A young girl had a child,
He was a real credit to humanity,
Lived a life of deep simplicity,
Had a plan to achieve equality,
And redefined the word divinity –
They said he's gone wild.

As a spring sun melted the snow,
The child now man cruelly died,
The field-agents spiritually cried,
Conscious that they had despised
The code of the baby who spied –
On a world with nowhere to go.

PEACE AFFECTION HAPPINESS

Austin cp

CHRISTMAS IS ALWAYS WONDERFUL

The Christmas I met you
The birds danced upon the branches,
Cats and dogs sang in the back entry
And all the fish, at least the few there were,
Got out of the Mersey and did the Rumba
On New Brighton shore.
It was rumoured that in Australia
Kangaroos gave lifts in their pouches
To baby Tigers.
It was also reported that
The sun took over shift work with
The moon.
The former worked by night
And the latter worked by day.
Everybody born to hate
Began to love;
But those born to love
Kept on loving.
In a word, perhaps that Word,
I really don't know,
The Lion lay down with the Lamb.
Every Christmas has been the same:
Flesh has become spirit
And spirit has become flesh
All because of a love
Beyond defining.
And so I bring you gifts
Of shared love
Of exchanged hope
Of mutual love
And beads of infinite trust
To encircle us
In one life

THIS AND THAT

A baby is a baby
Pure and simple
Before becoming
This and that.

God is a God
Pure and simple
Before becoming
This and that.

Most of our troubles
Emerge from labels
Through which we become
This and that.

Perhaps that's why God
Became a baby
To stop us becoming
This and that.

The reason for God
Becoming a baby
Is to say we're equal
And that's that!