

# SILENT NIGHT

# Poetry Challenge

**This Silent Night**  
By Martin Thomas



On the first day.  
Of the last month.

Advent.

“How will you prepare?”

Will you look forward to opening  
numbered doors  
– with chocolate treats each day?  
A scented candle, burning centre stage,  
reminding you to pray?

Will preparation prayers and grace amaze,  
around the kitchen table?  
Will you finally invite your friends to church,  
to: “Come and see the stable?”

Will you spruce up your decor with tinsel  
– carry home a six-foot tree?  
Will you light up roadside windows,  
with Good News for all to see?

Will you treasure school nativities,  
with lamb and donkey suits.  
Will you spike ribboned oranges  
with jelly tots  
– and mull on spiritual fruit?

Will a generation sing at dusk,  
door-to-door on frosty streets?  
Heralding with acapella songs,  
a heaven-born Prince of Peace?

Will you know the ‘reason for the season’:  
A simple manger birth?  
Will you resist the pull to trend and spend  
– receive true Christmas worth?

Or.

Will you say you just don’t have the time...  
...to stop, to stand, and stare?

It’s not a trivial question:  
“How will you prepare?”

But, in this holy season,  
I’d ask you to remember  
The Church worldwide who cannot share  
our Advent, this December.

Theirs is a silenced Silent Night,  
that lasts from night to morn.  
With silent persecuted tears,  
that long for a new dawn.

Theirs is the Psalmist’s heartbeat.  
Who with words from long ago,  
cried to a future Saviour,  
to never let them go.

Theirs is the silent watching faith,  
that serves with joy each day.  
Their story shared around the globe,  
calling the Church to pray.

Theirs a united nations voice  
– revelation hopes and dreams.  
So much more than paper policies,  
Even Article 18.

And as we watch.  
And as we wait,  
for season’s presents to receive.  
Theirs is the voice that simply asks...  
...for the freedom to believe.

So, as we sing our carols,  
of lowing cattle in a stall.  
If the star shone bright,  
for shepherds and kings.  
Then this Silent Night’s for all.



Watch Martin perform the poem at:  
[www.sat7uk.org/ThisSilentNight](http://www.sat7uk.org/ThisSilentNight)

## ANALYSIS

1. The poem is split into two halves. What images is the writer trying to evoke in the first half? How did it make you feel? Did you feel differently by the end of the poem? If so, why?
2. What Christmas traditions do your family celebrate?
3. How would you feel / behave if you didn't have the freedom to do those things?
4. What is Article 18 of the United Nations and why is it important for this poem? (See: [www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights](http://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights).)
5. What could you do differently to prepare for Christmas during this year's Advent?

## ACTIVITY

- Write your own Advent / Christmas poem, inspired by the Silent Night Christmas carol (below for your reference).
- What message do you want to convey? Think about the poem's type and structure, e.g. will it use stanzas, with metre and rhyme? Or will it be free verse, haiku, or even an acrostic poem structure – using the 11 letters from 'Silent Night'?
- Use the other Advent resources from SAT-7 to add stories and context from the Middle East and North African region.

### Silent night (carol)

Silent night, holy night! All is calm, all is bright.  
Round yon Virgin, Mother and Child.  
Holy infant so tender and mild,  
Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.

Silent night, holy night! Shepherds quake at the sight.  
Glories stream from heaven afar  
Heavenly hosts sing Alleluia,  
Christ the Saviour is born! Christ the Saviour is born.

Silent night, holy night! Son of God love's pure light.  
Radiant beams from Thy holy face  
With dawn of redeeming grace,  
Jesus Lord, at Thy birth, Jesus Lord, at Thy birth.

