



Jesus Is Born: JESOUS AHATONHIA (Huron Christmas Carol)



Fr. Jean de Brebeuf, S.J., ca. 1642
Modern version by Anne Scheuerman, 1986

French Folk Tune
Arr. by Robert C. Zajkowski

With simplicity

[A] Gmi Dmi

- O Chris-tians, come take heart to - day. The sin - ful ways are
- The shep-herds in the fields were watch-ing O'er their flock by
- Be-hold, came wise men from the East To seek Him, the new-
- To Ma - ry's house, the wise men came And en-tered with great
- The Lord God gave to these wise men And to all Chris-ten-

Gmi F

[B]

- done. As pro-mised by the pro - phets, Sal - va - tion now has
- night. An an - gel of the Lord ap - peared, Sur - round-ed by great
- born. They came to see the King of Kings. His star shone till the
- joy. They found the Ho - ly In-fant there, And a-dored the Christ Child
- dom. The grace to know the ho - ly truth: Em - man - u - el has

Gmi F B^b E^b F Gmi E^b

[C]

- come. Hear what the carol-ing an - gels sing, How Vir - gin Ma - ry
- light. "O see the Sav - ior. Go." he said, "The Christ laid in a
- morn. It guid - ed them a - long their way, Un - til it stood where
- Boy. From all their trea-sures, wealth un-told, Gave Him frank - in - cense,
- come. The guid - ing Star shines through the night To lead us with His

Refrain:

1. bore the King:
 2. man - ger bed: Je - sous A - ha - ton - hia! Je - sus is
 3. Je - sus lay: (OR: Je - sus is born to - day! Je - sus is
 4. myrrh, and gold:
 5. lov - ing light:

born: Je - sous A - ha - ton - hia!
 born: Glo - ry in the high - est!

Pronunciation: Je-sous (YEH-SUS) A-ha-ton-hia (AH-HA-DUNE-KNEE)

Suggested Variations: (1) Soprano and Bass duet. (2) Soprano sings words. Bass chants *Jesous Ahatonhia* each phrase A B C. Chorus as written. (3) Soprano sings melody and lyrics on all verses and choruses. On Verse II Soprano and Bass sing lyrics. On Verse III Soprano, Tenor and Bass sing lyrics. On Verses IV, V Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass sing lyrics. (4) Any combination of Verse, Chorus and Chanting that is deemed suitable and appropriate to enhance the performance.

Accompaniment may consist of a simple droning using the notes of the Bass and Alto lines. Where plausible, the drone effect could be done by humming or using a soft oo sound. In any event, the approach should be simple, direct, straight-forward and reverential.



Within a bark and sapling long-house at Fort St. Marie, Fr. John Brebeuf wrote the first North American Christmas carol in the Huron Indian language. The French Jesuit worked among the Hurons from 1626 to 1649 in the country between Lake Simcoe and Georgian Bay, about 80 miles north of Toronto, Canada. In 1641 or 1642, Fr. Brebeuf wrote *Jesous Is Born: Jesous Ahatonhia* in terms the Hurons would understand. He set the words to a traditional French folk tune and the hymn entered the tribe's oral tradition.

"The Indians have a particular devotion for the night that was enlivened by the birth of the Son of God," Fr. Brebeuf wrote. "They build a small chapel of cedar and fir branches in honor of the Infant Jesus. Even those who are at a distance of more than two-days' journey meet at a given place to sing in honor of the new-born Child." One hundred years later, the Huron Carol re-emerged in Quebec. Written down and translated into French and English, the carol is still sung today. It is considered a national treasure.

This translation, from Huron into English, is an updated version of the carol. It was felt that much of the original intent of Fr. Brebeuf was lost in the literal translation. Each of the five verses was examined with diligence and care before the present ones were rewritten.

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