



## INFANT HOLY, INFANT LOWLY

Christmas Greetings!

How amazing it is that each part of our world keeps Christmas in its own special way – using its own unique kind of art, music, ceremony, decorations, and customs!

The keeping of Christmas in Poland includes the roasting of a Christmas pig and the scattering of straws upon a table at which one of the chairs has been left vacant for the Christ Child. And it includes the singing of this beautiful Christmas carol, “Infant Holy, Infant Lowly.”

The whole mystery of the Christ Child, “Holy yet Lowly,” is expressed in Edith Reed’s paraphrase of the text of the carol. Though we can understand how dumb animals like the “oxen lowing” could not know the full meaning of the presence of the Infant, it is much harder to understand how human beings today can “keep Christmas” in ways that leave out of their thoughts and actions the meaning of Christ’s coming.

Perhaps the *most essential truth* of our Christian faith is found in the words of the second stanza . . . “Shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.” The *essential truth* is that while God is always present, an awareness of His Presence is experienced only by those “keeping vigil” – seeking and anticipating His coming into their lives. Singing carols like these at Christmas help persons who hear the music prepare themselves for the season.

First, just listen to the text and tune to hear how well they fit together and how simple they are. Now listen more closely to see what rhythmic patterns keep repeating throughout the carol.

Write the pattern here: \_\_\_\_\_

Notice the way the four note melody is repeated again and again at different pitches throughout the carol. This is known in music composition as a “sequence.” Although this tune is a carol whose composer is unknown, the composition device of a motive with its repetition in a series of sequences is a standard part of composition even today. Perhaps your choir can experiment with writing its own carols based on simple motives and their repetition up and down the scale. Here is a motive – how would you finish it or make it into a sequence?

