

Silent Night

Poem by Joseph Mohr, music by Franz Gruber

A
Silent night, holy night.
E7 *A* *A7*
All is calm, all is bright.
D *A*
Round yon virgin, mother and child,
D *A*
Holy infant so tender and mild.
E7 *E* *A*
Sleep in heavenly peace,
 E7 *A*
Sleep in heavenly peace.

A
Silent night, holy night.
E7 *A* *A7*
Shepherds quake at the sight.
D *A*
Glory streams from heaven afar,

D *A*
Heavenly hosts sing alleluia.
E7 *E* *A*
Christ the Savior is born,
 E7 *A*
Christ the Savior is born.

A
Silent night, holy night.
E7 *A* *A7*
Son of God loves pure light.
D *A*
Radiance beams from thy holy face,
D *A*
With the dawn of redeeming grace.
E7 *E* *A* }
Jesus, Lord at thy birth, **INTRO**
 E7 *A* **&**
Jesus, Lord at thy birth. **OUTRO**

Christmas as you go

Scripture and History

by Bill Egan, Christmas Historian

The German words for the original six stanzas of the carol we know as "**Silent Night**" were written by Joseph Mohr in 1816, when he was a young priest assigned to a pilgrimage church in Mariapfarr, Austria. He spent much of this time ministering to the least of these and was described as a man who fulfilled the description of the title pastor. No story survives to tell us if any particular event inspired Joseph Mohr to pen his poetic version of the birth of the Christ child.

On December 24, 1818 Joseph Mohr journeyed to the home of musician-schoolteacher Franz Gruber who lived in an apartment over the schoolhouse in nearby Arnsdorf. He showed his friend the poem and asked him to add a melody and guitar accompaniment so that it could be sung at Midnight Mass. The St. Nicholas organ was out of commission. Also the assistant pastor, dearly loved guitar music.

On that Christmas Eve, 1818 the carol "**Stille Nacht! Heilige Nacht**" was heard for the first time in a village church in Oberndorf, Austria. The congregation at Midnight Mass in St. Nicholas Church listened as the voices of the assistant pastor, Father Joseph Mohr, and the choir director, Franz Xaver Gruber, rang through the church to the accompaniment of Fr. Mohr's guitar. On each of the six verses, the choir repeated the last two lines in four-part harmony.



Father Joseph Mohr & Franz Gruber
Image from [Kirche+Leben](#)

Hermann Hauser II
Image from [Trilogy Guitars](#)

A few weeks into the New Year Karl Mauracher, an organ builder and repairman from the Ziller Valley, traveled to Oberndorf to fix St. Nicholas' organ. While he worked, Mohr told the story of how "Silent Night" had come to be. Mauracher learned the song and spread it around the communities as he pursued his profession fixing organs. In 1832 the Strasser Family folk singers learned the song in one of these communities and spread it further. King William IV of Prussia heard the carol and had it incorporated into his annual Christmas celebration.

Another Austrian folk music family brought *Silent Night* to New York in 1839.

Now translated into hundreds of languages, it is sung by untold millions every December from small chapels in the Andes to great cathedrals in Rome.