



*'for unto us a child is born,
Unto us a Son is given'*
Isaiah 9:6

SCRIPTURE, PRAYER AND REFLECTION
FOR THE CHRISTMAS SEASON

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God is with us!

Happy Christmas. Once again, as with last year, our celebration of Christmas happens in a time of pandemic. While we are not subject to the same level of restrictions that we faced into last Christmas, we are still not out of the woods, so to speak. This Christmas we are facing into uncertain times, but the central meaning of Christmas has not changed; we still celebrate the birth of Jesus, the incarnation of God with us.

On the cusp of Christmas Day last year, Pope Francis reminded us that Christmas brings joy and strength that can remove the pessimism that has spread in human hearts as a result of the pandemic. Speaking from the Vatican he said,

“Christmas is the feast of love incarnate and born for us in Jesus Christ. He is the light of mankind shining in the darkness, giving meaning to human existence and to the whole of history. Christmas invites us to reflect... on the goodness of God.”

The Christmas message offers us hope, light and salvation. As we move into the Christmas season and as we begin to decorate our homes with lights and tinsel, let us hold on to this true meaning of the season.

For many of us, this message is made physical in our homes in the placing of a crib at our hearths or on our tables. Pope Francis, in his 2019 letter, ‘Admirabile Signum’ said of the crib that “[it] never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus’ birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God”.



So, once again in our homes, let us make the crib a special focus. Let us allow it to be our guiding light, leading the way in these uncertain times.

We might allow it to remind us that God chose for Jesus to be born into uncertain times himself; the son of a young single mother, born in a place far from their home, with threat all around. Jesus, the God-child, knows what it means to live in uncertain times and he is made incarnate- made real- with us once again this year. Good news indeed!

On each of the twelve days we invite you to spend time with scripture, reflection and prayer. You may want to use this booklet in your private prayer or find a time to gather each day with your family.

We pray this Christmas that each of us will rediscover the meaning of Our Lord's Nativity and the great hope that it proclaims for the world. May you have a happy, holy, safe and peaceful Christmas and New Year.



Saturday 25th December 2021

The Nativity of Our Lord

Luke 2: 15 - 20

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the LORD has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen, which were just as they had been told.

Reflection

Stable of Bethlehem

Space of tenderness, home of hospitality;
To an anxious couple in search of shelter
To a new-born child fragile and vulnerable
To poor shepherds on the margins of town and society
To searching Magi, believing in the promise of the star.

As we rejoice in God-with-us
May we become Bethlehem spaces
Open to receive and embrace
the fragile, the vulnerable, the displaced;
in ourselves
in one another
in our world.

Christmas
Stillness of God, whisper of love
Breath of God, quiet mystery
Light of God, holy wisdom
Shadow of God, birth of mercy

May God be with us in tenderness
and love this Christmas.



Prayer

Heavenly Father,
help us rightly to remember the birth of Jesus,
that we may share in the song of the angels,
the gladness of the shepherds
and the worship of the Wise Men.

Close the door of hate and open the door of love
all over the world.

Let kindness come with every gift and every
greeting.
Deliver us from evil by the blessings that Christ
brings.

May Christmas morning make us jubilant to be
your children and Christmas evening find us filled
with grateful thoughts, forgiven and forgiving,
bringing love, peace and joy to all we meet.
Amen

Sunday 26th December 2021

Feast of the Holy Family

Luke 2:41-52

Every year the parents of Jesus used to go to Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover. When he was twelve years old, they went up for the feast as usual. When they were on their way home after the feast, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem without his parents knowing it. They assumed he was with the caravan, and it was only after a day's journey that they went to look for him among their relations and acquaintances. When they failed to find him they went back to Jerusalem looking for him everywhere.

Three days later, they found him in the Temple, sitting among the doctors, listening to them, and asking them questions; and all those who heard him were astounded at his intelligence and his replies. They were overcome when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'My child, why have you done this to us? See how worried your father and I have been, looking for you.'

'Why were you looking for me?' he replied. 'Did you not know that I must be busy with my Father's affairs?' But they did not understand what he meant.

He then went down with them and came to Nazareth and lived under their authority.

His mother stored up all these things in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom, in stature, and in favour with God and men.

Prayer

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, in you we contemplate the splendour of true love, to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth, grant that our families too may be places of communion and prayer, authentic schools of the Gospel and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth, may families never again experience violence, rejection and division: may all who have been hurt or scandalized find comfort and healing.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph graciously hear our prayer. Amen



Reflection

On this Sunday following Christmas we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. Today, the Church encourages us to look to the family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph for inspiration and encouragement.

Family is the place where we learn to love by first being loved ourselves. The family where love is found is a holy family. Holiness is being like God, and God is love. When we are loved, and when we love, we experience God in our lives.

We know the Holy Family were not exempt from the hurts and challenges that face all families. They were a poor family who faced daily toil.

They would have encountered misunderstanding and gossip from others. They would have encountered the death of loved ones; we know St. Joseph most likely passed away prior to Jesus' public ministry.

In today's Scripture reading we see Mary and Joseph as worried parents in a crisis when their son is lost. When he is found they struggle to understand his reply when he is asked why he has done this. Mary devoutly ponders in her heart, and Joseph silently provides for them in strong faith when he fails to understand what Jesus says to him. For the next eighteen years, until he began his public ministry, Jesus lived under their authority.

On this feast of the Holy Family, it is good to pray in thanks for our own parents and family. No one's family is perfect. All our family members, including ourselves have made mistakes and got things wrong. We have all done and said things that we have later regretted. Regardless of this, we owe our family everything and for this we thank God.

Monday 27th December 2021

St. John Apostle and Evangelist

★ John 20:2- 8

'On the first day of the week Mary of Magdala came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved. 'They have taken the Lord out of the tomb' she said 'and we don't know where they have put him.'

So Peter set out with the other disciple to go to the tomb. They ran together, but the other disciple, running faster than Peter, reached the tomb first; he bent down and saw the linen cloths lying on the ground, but did not go in. Simon Peter who was following now came up, went right into the tomb, saw the linen cloths on the ground, and also the cloth that had been over his head; this was not with the linen cloths but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in; he saw and he believed.'

Reflection

Saint John, who was able to outrun Peter on their way to the empty tomb, is called, "the beloved disciple" in the Gospel. He was a Galilean, son of Zebedee and brother to Saint James the Greater, both of whom were fishermen. They were called by Jesus to be disciples as they were mending their nets by the Sea of Galilee. Fast forward and we see he was the only one of the apostles who did not forsake Jesus in the final hours of his Passion, and it was to him Jesus entrusted the care of his Holy Mother as He hung dying on the Cross.

John was a believer, an apostle, and an Evangelist, the writer of the fourth Gospel, three Epistles and the Book of Revelation. He wrote down his experience, what he had heard and what he had seen as he followed Jesus. He wanted to share his Joy in knowing Jesus and enable other people to experience that Joy. St. Jerome relates that when St John, as a result of age and weakness, was no longer able to preach to the people, he would be carried to the assembly of the faithful by his disciples, with great difficulty; and every time said to his flock only these words: "My dear children, love one another."



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Prayer

Loving God,
today as we recall the life and work of Saint John the Evangelist, help us to see the urgency of our call to share the Good News of God's love, in our families our parishes and the world. May we like Saint John learn how to run in search of you.

By prayer and reflection may we come to understand the wisdom Saint John taught. May our lives show that we take to heart the words of Saint John 'My dear children, love one another'.

Amen

Tuesday 28th December 2021

Feast of the Holy Innocents

Matthew 2:13-16

‘Now after they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.”

Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.”

When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men.

Reflection

The Feast of the Holy Innocents is celebrated soon after Christmas Day. The holy Innocents are innocent victims of King Herod's lust for power, cruelty, and desire to kill the Child Jesus. They are innocent victims of the cruelty of the same Roman Empire which nailed Jesus to a Cross. We think about the children today who are innocent victims including children whose families are forced live in poverty or forced to flee their homes.

As people of Faith we are carriers of Hope and Joy. We believe the promise of 'Emmanuel' God-with-us, in sorrows and in celebrations. The infant Jesus, born on that Holy Night when the Heavenly Choir of angels sang, is the Light of the world and conquers its darkness and sorrow. We find well-springs of Hope among all those who live lives of unselfishness, generosity, kindness and compassion in their families and communities. They are God's Kingdom builders. Today we have an opportunity to thank God for his extravagant love, the reason for our Hope. It is also a time to ask God to help us work to create the kind of world he intended, a compassionate, just, merciful and non-violent world.



Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, on this Feast of The Holy Innocents, we remember You embraced and placed Your hands upon the little children who came to You, and said: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven "

Look now with fatherly eyes on the innocence of children and their parents' devotion. Bless them this day. *(parents may sign the forehead of each child with the sign of the cross.)*

In Your grace and goodness let them grow in faith, longing for You, loving You, fearing You, keeping Your commandments.

We ask you to help all of us make your Kingdom come in this world and make our homes, parishes and communities places of compassion and kindness, where there are no more innocent victims.

We thank you God this day for your extravagant love. In taking on our flesh you know from the inside, our joys and our sorrows.

In this Christmas season help us to praise and glorify you for all you have done for us.

Amen.

Wednesday 29th December 2021

Fifth Day within the Octave of Christmas

Luke 2:22-35

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord as it is written in the law of the Lord, "Every firstborn male shall be designated as holy to the Lord", and they offered a sacrifice according to what is stated in the law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons."

Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon; this man was righteous and devout, looking forward to the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit rested on him. It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Guided by the Spirit, Simeon came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him what was customary under the law, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying

*'Now, Master, you can let your servant go in peace, just as you promised;
because my eyes have seen the salvation
which you have prepared for all the nations to see,
a light to enlighten the pagans
and the glory of your people Israel.'*

And the child's father and mother were amazed at what was being said about him. Then Simeon blessed them and said to his mother Mary, "This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed so that the inner thoughts of many will be revealed—and a sword will pierce your own soul too."

Reflection

This was a moment of joy for Mary and Joseph presenting their first born Son to God. It was a moment of joy for the elderly Simeon who had been waiting his lifetime for this encounter. Simeon's words to Mary however introduce a different cadence: the joy of salvation is intermingled with suffering for Jesus, for Mary, and for Christian disciples. Today we draw consolation from the example of Mary and Jesus. Their lives show us that the joy of salvation comes through embracing and transcending suffering. Speaking about the encounter in the Temple Pope Francis has said "the eyes of Simeon saw salvation because they were expecting it. They were eyes that were waiting, full of hope". He encouraged his listeners to ask God for 'a new way of looking, that knows how to see grace, how to look for one's neighbour, how to hope'. "Then", Pope Francis added, "our eyes too will see salvation".

Prayer

With Mary we advance confidently towards the fulfilment of God's promise and to her we pray: Mary, Virgin and Mother, you who, moved by the Holy Spirit, welcomed the word of life in the depths of your humble faith: as you gave yourself completely to the Eternal One, help us to say our own "yes" to the urgent call, as pressing as ever, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus.

Virgin of listening and contemplation, Mother of love, Bride of the eternal wedding feast, pray for the Church, whose pure icon you are, that she may never be closed in on herself or lose her passion for establishing God's kingdom. Mother of the living Gospel, wellspring of happiness for God's little ones, pray for us. Amen. Alleluia!
(Prayer at the conclusion of Evangelii Gaudium. Abridged)



Thursday 30th December 2021

Sixth Day within the Octave of Christmas

Luke 2:36-40

There was also a prophet, Anna the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, having lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, then as a widow to the age of eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshipped there with fasting and prayer night and day. At that moment she came and began to praise God and to speak about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.

When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

Prayer

Anna, the prophetess, was filled with the spirit of wisdom and hope by the Holy Spirit. We now pray to the Holy Spirit to come to our 21st century troubled world.

Come, Holy Spirit,
Come, Spirit of God,
Come with your peace, your power, your light.
Come with forgiveness, courage and hope.
Come now to our suffering world,
sick with a killing virus
and everywhere threatened with silent death,
but most cruelly among your poorest children.
Come to our first responders, our doctors
and nurses and hospital staff,
the men and women who preserve the civic order
and protect us from fire and bring us our food.
Comforter, we call you, Counsellor, Consoler,
Advocate and Paraclete.
Come to the hearts and minds of all
who seek to walk with those who suffer.
With your gift, the community of believers
who came to be called Church, was born.
Strengthen us to be working signs for all
humanity to be one, a community of mutual care.
Amen.

(Leo J. O'Sullivan S.J. Abridged)



Fra Angelico Fresco in St Marcos Monastery, Florence, Italy.

Reflection

Anna was a prophetess who remained at the temple day and night, worshipping, fasting and praying. Most people would have disregarded Anna as an elderly woman who didn't have much to offer the world because she was a bit religious, always in church praying.

It may be that for some of us that our gift to the Church and to the community is to be in the background praying. Our Churches and communities need to be held in prayer as they try to navigate the crises of today, including the pandemic.

Anna was in the right place at the right time when Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into the Temple. Inspired by the Holy spirit her wisdom enabled her to recognise this tiny baby was the Saviour of the world. Her spirituality spilled into thanksgiving to God and those prophetic words she spoke to Mary and Joseph.

Friday 31st December 2021

7th Day within the Christmas Octave.

Feast of Pope St. Sylvester I

John 1:1- 5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.



"Pope St Sylvester" by Lawrence OP, Creative Commons

Prayer

God of the approaching New Year, we are walking into mystery.
Fill us with hope and an abiding trust that dwells in us amid all our joys and sorrows.
God of new beginnings and wonderful surprises, thank you for this gift of a new year.
May it be a time of grace, a time to grow in faith and love, a time to renew commitments to following Your Son, Jesus. May it be a year of blessing, a time to cherish family and friends, a time to renew efforts at work, a time to embrace faith more fully, a time to work for peace and justice.
Walk with us, please, in every day and every hour of this new year, that the light of Christ might shine through us, in spite of our weaknesses and failings.
Above all, may we remember this year that we are pilgrims on the sacred path to You. Amen

Reflection

As we bid farewell to 2021 there is much comfort in the words of today's Scripture which reassure us that Jesus is 'a light that darkness could not overpower'.

Many experienced darkness in the Covid 19 world this year. Many families among us are grieving for those who died this year and we share in their sadness. This was again a year when the world as we knew it changed utterly and forced us to confront our mortality and vulnerability.

We have also witnessed charity and heroism flourishing in the midst of this crisis. Even in difficult times we can find things to be grateful for. Pope Francis has spoken of his gratitude for 'the spontaneous acts of altruism and heroic dedication' shown by so many. He tells us the crisis has shown us that, especially in times of need, we depend on our solidarity with others. "In a new way, it is inviting us to place our lives at the service of others. It should make us aware of global injustice and wake us up to the cry of the poor and of our gravely diseased planet." He says the risk of contagion from a virus should teach us how the "contagion" of love passes from one heart to another.

Pope Francis assures us "Just like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Lord will also accompany us in future through His word and through the breaking of bread in the Eucharist. And He will say to us: "Do not be afraid! For I have overcome death."

We remember another Pope today as this is the feast of St. Sylvester. He was a fourth century Pope whose devout faith so moved his contemporaries, that they publicly honoured him as "confessor" one who, though not suffering martyrdom, lived a life completely given to Christ.

Saturday 1st January 2022

Solemnity of Mary Mother of God

Luke 2:15- 19

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.

Reflection

Today is more than a celebration of a new calendar year. Today we celebrate the Feast of Mary Mother of God. It's an opportunity to honour Mary, the Mother of God, and our mother too, who said "yes" in the name of all of us. Her "yes" enabled God to take flesh in the Person of Jesus, who came as a humble baby who would grow and walk in our midst, proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God.

With grace and courageous faith, Mary cooperated fully with what God asked of her; not just at the Annunciation, but each and every day of her life as she lived out God's plan for her. Difficult though it can be sometimes to believe or accept, God does have a plan for each us. Can we follow the example of Mary? Can we put our faith, hope and trust in God? Can we ponder and treasure in our hearts all that happens to us? Mary is often given the title 'Queen of Peace' and today is also World Day of Peace. We know that sadly there are many people and countries suffering because of violence and random acts of terrorism. Some of these acts of violence take place in our own communities and in our own streets. Today we pray to Mary, Mother of God, and Queen of Peace, to help us play our part in breaking down barriers of hate and fear and bring whispers of hope.



jean Louis Mazieres IMG_4205Creative Commons
Giuseppe de Ribera. 1591-1652. Naples. L'Adoration des Bergers. Louvre

Prayer

We pray that in the year ahead we, like Mary, will cooperate with God in the ongoing mission of Christ, the Prince of Peace.
Father of Jesus, You who sent your angels to herald your Son's coming with cries of peace. Hear our cry now
That your peace may touch all corners of our world.
You whose Son called all peacemakers blessed, Help us forge peace in your name.
Peace among nations.
Peace among neighbours.
Peace among families.
When we look back on this time
May we recall it as the time we all heard the angels' cry
And worked together to reveal that peace to all.
A peace worthy of God, born into the world.
Amen

Sunday 2nd January 2022

Second Sunday after Christmas

John 1: 1- 14

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.

Prayer

Christ has no body now but yours
No hands, no feet on earth but yours
Yours are the eyes through which He looks
Compassion on this world
Yours are the feet with which He walks to do good
Yours are the hands with which He blesses all the world
Yours are the hands
Yours are the feet
Yours are the eyes
You are His body
Christ has no body now on earth but yours.

(St Teresa of Avila)



Reflection

In today's Gospel, we see Jesus presented as the Word. In a beautiful poetic way, the writer St. John brings us to the very beginning of time and reminds us that the Word was there from the beginning. The Word was made flesh and lived among us. This gospel passage also gives us the assurance that, if we come to know Jesus, we will become children of God.

As Saint John Paul II, wrote, 'the mystery of the birth of Jesus that took place over 2000 years ago must be lived today and every day. The Word that found a dwelling place in and through Mary comes to knock on our hearts this Christmas and every Christmas, today and every day.'

We are now his own people; the people Jesus lives among. This Christmas season we are invited again to open our hearts to him. To accept Him means to respond generously to our call to love in ways that radiate God to the world. This is a call to building community so that everyone is cared for and valued. It means being people who are part of the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God.

Monday 3rd January 2022

Psalm 97(98): 1, 3-6)

Responsorial Psalm, Mass of today

Sing a new song to the Lord
for he has worked wonders.
His right hand and his holy arm
have brought salvation.
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation
of our God.

All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation of our God.
Shout to the Lord, all the earth,
ring out your joy.
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation
of our God.

Sing psalms to the Lord with the harp
with the sound of music.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
acclaim the King, the Lord.
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation
of our God.

Reflection

Lines from Issac Watts' well known and much loved 18th century Christmas carol 'Joy to the World' echo the exuberant proclamation of the psalmist here and the joy that the Christmas event brings to all of creation:

'Joy to the world, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ.
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy.'

On our journey as followers of Jesus we cling fast to that joy and try to make it real in the context in which we find ourselves – in families, parishes and, wherever we can, working to make the world a more just and loving place. This is a lifetime challenge, a lifetime journey as we stumble forward trying to follow Jesus. As we face into the uncertainties of 2022 we reflect on 'The Song of the Seed' by Macrina Wiederkehr OSB, who urges us to be patient with ourselves – 'a disciple is not made in a hurry'.

Prayer

The Song of the Seed

Life unfolds
a petal at a time
slowly.
The beauty of the process is crippled
when I try to hurry growth.
Life has its inner rhythm
which must be respected.
It cannot be rushed or hurried.
Like daylight stepping out of darkness,
like morning creeping out of night,
life unfolds slowly a petal at a time
like a flower opening to the sun,
slowly.
God's call unfolds
a Word at a time
slowly.
A disciple is not made in a hurry.
Slowly I become like the One
to whom I am listening.
Life unfolds
a petal at a time
like you and I
becoming followers of Jesus,
discipled into a new way of living
deeply and slowly.
Be patient with life's unfolding petals.
If you hurry the bud it withers.
If you hurry life it limps.
Each unfolding is a teaching
a movement of grace filled with silent pauses
breathtaking beauty
tears and heartaches.
Life unfolds
a petal at a time
deeply and slowly.

(Macrina Wiederkehr OSB)



Tuesday 4th January 2022

John 1:35-39

The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

Reflection

In this Scripture passage John the Baptist turns the eyes of his two followers to our Lord. He says to them, "Look, there is the Lamb of God..." They see Jesus and leave John. John had the joy of knowing that he was fulfilling the purpose of his life by pointing others to Christ.

In this John gives us a wonderful example. It is so easy to get self-absorbed in this life but we know true Christian love is selfless. True Christian living points others to Jesus. Jesus asks the disciples a simple question "What are you looking for?" And when they ask him in response 'Where do you live?', Jesus invites them to 'Come and see'. He extends an invitation to investigate, to take time and to come to their own conclusion.

Today Jesus is inviting us to think again about what we are looking for in life. What are our priorities in our family, in our parish and community? Jesus invites us to 'Come and See' and to discover for ourselves the mission that he has for each of us.



Saint John the Baptist Pointing Out Christ as the Lamb of God
c. 1500-1510 Master of the Saint John Altarpiece (Hugo Jacobsz.?)
Philadelphia Museum of Art

Prayer

God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of truth in my own place, while not intending it if I do but keep His commandments. Therefore, I will trust Him, whatever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him, in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him. If I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends. He may throw me among strangers. He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me. Still, He knows what He is about.

(Saint John Henry Newman)

Wednesday 5th January 2022

Psalm 99(100)

(Responsorial Psalm, Mass of today)

★ Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Serve the Lord with gladness.
Come before him, singing for joy.

Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Know that he, the Lord, is God.
He made us, we belong to him,
we are his people, the sheep of his flock.

Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Go within his gates, giving thanks.
Enter his courts with songs of praise.
Give thanks to him and bless his name.

Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth.

Indeed, how good is the Lord,
eternal his merciful love.
He is faithful from age to age.

Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth.



Reflection

As we prepare for tomorrow's great Feast of the Epiphany when we take down the Christmas tree and put away the tinsel, we invite you today to reflect back on this Christmas period and the true meaning of Christmas – the incarnation, God made flesh and living among us. African American theologian Howard Thurman reflected on what he felt was the meaning of Christmas in the poem; The Work of Christmas.

The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,
when the kings and princes are home,
when the shepherds are back with their flocks,
the work of Christmas begins:
to find the lost,
to heal the broken,
to feed the hungry,
to release the prisoner,
to rebuild the nations,
to bring peace among the people,
to make music in the heart.

Prayer

O God, Trinity of love,
from the profound communion of your divine life,
pour out upon us a torrent of fraternal love.
Grant us the love reflected in the actions of Jesus,
in his family of Nazareth,
and in the early Christian community.
Grant that we Christians may live the Gospel,
discovering Christ in each human being,
recognizing him crucified
in the sufferings of the abandoned
and forgotten of our world,
and risen in each brother or sister
who makes a new start.
Come, Holy Spirit, show us your beauty,
reflected in all the peoples of the earth,
so that we may discover anew
that all are important and all are necessary,
different faces of the one humanity
that God so loves.
Amen.

(Pope Francis- Ecumenical Christian Prayer at the end of encyclical 'Fratelli Tutti')

Wednesday 6th January 2022

Feast of the Epiphany

Matthew 2:1-12

In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel.'"

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Prayer

Lord Jesus
may your light shine our way,
as once it guided the steps of the magi:
that we too may be led into your presence
and worship you,
the Child of Mary,
the Word of the Father,
the King of nations,
the Saviour of mankind;
to whom be glory for ever. Amen
(Frank Colqhoun)



Reflection

The journey of the wise men is an exciting story; it's a story of reading the signs of the times, of guidance on the way, of delight in finding faith and God, of the intrigue of a greedy and jealous king, and of the good beating the bad when the wise men outwit Herod.

Pope Francis said, "in order to find Jesus, we also need to take a different route, to follow a different path, his path, the path of humble love. And we have to persevere."

He recalled that the Gospel tells us that the Magi, after encountering Jesus, left by a "different road from that of Herod. An alternative route than that of the world, like the road taken by those who surround Jesus at Christmas: Mary and Joseph, the shepherds." For, he said, "only those who leave behind their worldly attachments and undertake a journey find the mystery of God."

Each of us has our own personal star guiding us – the star of prayer, love, friendship, support... the star has a different name at different times. Be grateful for your star – and be grateful that you have been a star for others. In the book of God, each of us is a star.

A Christmas Blessing

May each person who comes into your life
be greeted as another Christ.
May the honour given the Babe of Bethlehem
be that which you extend to every guest who enters your presence.
May the hope of this sacred season settle in your soul.
May it be for you a foundation of courage
when times of distress occupy your inner land.
May the wonder and awe that fills the eyes of children
be awakened within you.
May it lead you to renewed awareness and appreciation
of whatever you too easily take for granted.
May the bonds of love for one another be strengthened
as you gather with your family and friends
around the table of festivity and nourishment.
May you keep your eye on the Star within you and trust
this Luminescent Presence to guide and direct you each day.
May you go often to the Bethlehem of your heart and visit the One who
offers you peace. May you bring this peace into our world.

(Adapted from Joyce Rupp's 'Out of the Ordinary')

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Northern Pastoral Network

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