



**FEAST OF HOLY
INNOCENT MARTYRS
DECEMBER 28**



**FEAST OF
HOLY FAMILY
DECEMBER 30**



THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY OF SRI LANKA Messenger

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► *Christmas Message of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka*

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."

Once again, we celebrate God's entry into human history in the Mystery of Incarnation, the birth of the Son of God in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. We exult in praise and thanksgiving to God Our Father joining with the heavenly hosts. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son so that whosoever believes in Him may not perish but may have eternal life." (John 3: 16).

Jesus has made it abundantly clear that by His coming into our midst He wants us to share in the life He alone can give. He wants us to live our lives as meaningfully as possible here below, and later come to share in His divine life for all eternity. In the celebration of the Mystery of Incarnation Jesus invites all of us to come to experience the life He offers. Hence, our celebration of Christmas cannot and must not be a mere recalling of His historical birth. For, He wishes to be 'born' in the personal lives of each of us.

In 2012, we celebrate Christmas in the 'Year of Faith' declared by His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI. He underlines: "Ever since the start of my ministry as Successor of Peter, I have spoken of the need to rediscover the journey of faith so as to shed ever clearer light on the joy and renewed enthusiasm of the encounter with Christ" (*Porta Fidei*, art. 2). He invites all of us believers to rediscover the beauty of faith and the joy that comes from believing in Him and by doing so be filled with renewed eagerness and enthusiasm to proclaim Him to others. He invites us to proclaim to the world of today that the act of faith is totally in keeping with human nature and that it is completely reasonable to say, I believe. The Universal Shepherd, reminds us that in this 'Year of Faith' we must go beyond a mere commemoration of the anniversaries pertaining to the promulgation of the 'Year of Faith'. We need to understand that the true spiritual meaning of the Council was to communicate Faith in Christ and encounter Him. Let us, therefore, make this Christmas a fitting occasion to grasp the beauty of Christian Faith and experience the unique joy of being able to believe in Jesus as Lord and Saviour of the world.

Every Christmas invites us to take a very realistic look at the society in which we live. It invites us to pay careful attention to the poor in our midst and be sensitive to the various forms of human sufferings prevailing in our society. Let us be mindful of the disturbing levels of disregard towards the indescribable value of life and the culture of impunity that appears to have overtaken us. While we engage in various forms of charitable activities, Christmas invites us to go still further and be mindful of those things that keep the poor always poor. Let us commit ourselves to changing all that is not in keeping

Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith

+ His Eminence Malcolm Cardinal Ranjith
President
Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka

Norbert M. Andradi

+ His Lordship, Bishop Norbert M. Andradi OMI
Secretary General
Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sri Lanka



Painting by Marian Casiechetty

with God's Holy Will in our midst, becoming agents of peace and reconciliation. Let us be engaged in the task of making the Sri Lankan society a better place for all of us to live. As we give thanks to God for Jesus, let us pray that all of us be given a renewed joy and a rediscovery of the uniqueness of our faith in Jesus as the Risen Lord and Saviour.

We wish a Blessed Christmas to all our faithful, our fellow citizens and all men and women of goodwill!

Feast of Blessing at Tewatte Basilica



The New Year Feast of Blessing at the Tewatte Basilica will be held on Wednesday, January 2, 2013 presided over by Archbishop Emeritus, His Grace Oswald Gomis. The service will begin at 9.30 a.m.

There will be a recitation of the Rosary at 9.00 a.m., and Blessing of vehicles and occupational equipment will take place after Holy Mass.

Rev. Fr. Priya Jayamanne
Administrator

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**"When a Child
is Born"**



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**Wish all our readers a
holy & joyful Christmas!**



Highlights of the Meeting of the National Commission for Sacred Liturgy and Culture

The Commission held its meeting at 'Lankarama' Balcombe Place on October 18, 2012

1. The Chairman His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando, Bishop of Kandy, expressed his concern and regret that there are still abuses and aberrations taking place in the celebration of the Holy Mass.

2. Priests, diocesan liturgy directors and superiors of major congregations are duty bound to safeguard and promote the liturgical norms of the church assiduously. General Instructions on Roman Missal (GIRM 24) states "Nevertheless a Priest must remember that he is the servant of the sacred liturgy, and that he himself is not permitted, only his own initiative, to add, to remove, or to change anything in the celebration of the Mass." Further GIRM 22 states "The Diocesan Bishop, the chief shepherd of the mysteries of God in the particular church entrusted to his care, is the moderator, promoter and guardian of the entire liturgical life."

3. Since the Sinhala lectionary and the Sinhala Roman Missal are out of print it was decided to seek the help of certain experts and the final draft of the Sinhala Missal be given to Archbishop Emeritus Most Rt. Rev. Dr. Oswald Gomis for his perusal and approval.

4. Certain expressions based on Bud-

dhist philosophy has been used in the Sinhala Roman Missal. In the new translation care will have to be taken to use expressions, that are theologically accurate.

5. It was observed that many abuses at Wedding Masses degrade the sanctity of the celebrations, indecent dress worn by the brides and retinue as well as floral arrangements that clutter the sanctuary can be a disturbance to the liturgy. Buddhists and Hindus do not degrade their temples and Kovils observed the Commission.

6. Inappropriate hymns and songs to be taken away. "Moreover, to be suitable for use in the liturgy, a sung text must not only be doctrinally correct, but must in itself be an expression of the Catholic Faith." (Directory on Music and Liturgy 2008)

7. Participation of non Catholics in the offertory procession is not encouraged as the Eucharist is for the Catholics.

8. Photographers and video recorders should not obstruct the celebration of the Eucharist, especially during the Readings, Homily and the Consecration.

9. In light of the above mentioned abuses, all parish priests are urged to instruct the parties including the choristers to abide by the liturgical norms and most importantly the dress code and thus maintain the sanctity of a Wedding Mass.

10. The Archdiocesan Liturgy Committee is in the process of preparing a set of norms and regulations regarding the Wedding Mass which could be forwarded to other dioceses for implementation.

11. A CD album of the Gregorian chant and other Latin sacred songs together with the words and notations are for sale.

12. Upon request the national commission is willing to conduct training programmes in the respective dioceses through the diocesan liturgy directors.

13. All decisions taken at this commission to be communicated to priests in the dioceses.

14. In the event of the diocesan liturgy director being unable to be present himself at the commission meeting, another priest of that diocese is expected to be present.

15. Liturgical activities of the dioceses were reported.

16. Following up on the sub-committee report it was decided to organise the national liturgy seminar for the laity in each diocese for wider participation. These seminars are to be held in 2013.

17. It was decided to continue the three meetings for each calendar year.

**Rev. Fr. Ignatius L. Varnakulasingham
National Secretary**

Christmas Carols

St. Joseph's College, Colombo



Graced by His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Vianney Fernando, Bishop of Kandy, the choristers, staff members and prefects of St. Joseph's College, Colombo 10 presented beautiful Christmas Carols at the Auditorium of the College on December 8, 2012.

(Archdiocese Website)

St. Peter's College, Colombo



St. Peter's College, Colombo 4 held their Carol Service on Sunday December 9, 2012. His Lordship, Rt. Rev. Dr. Emmanuel Fernando, Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo, presided together with the Rector of the College, Rev. Fr. Travis Gabriel.

(Archdiocese website)

New Church for Welikanna Parish

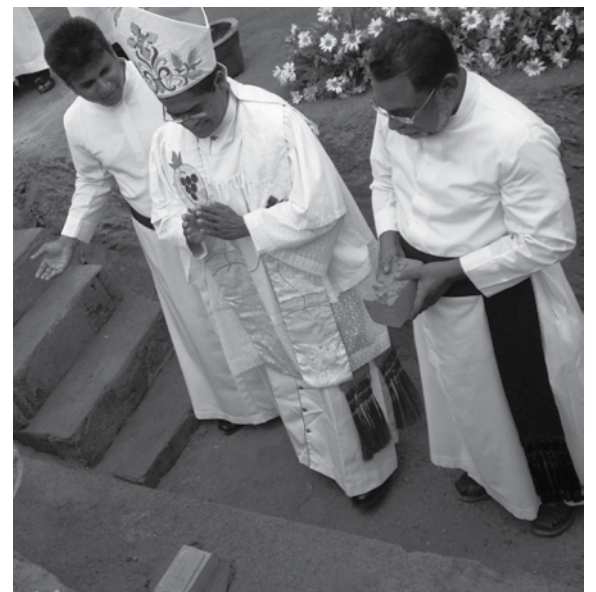
His Lordship Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell Silva, Auxiliary Bishop of Colombo laid the foundation to construct a new building for the existing old church at Welikanna, Waga on December 8. The 166-year-old Holy Rosary Church building is in a dilapidated condition.

Before the foundation laying ceremony, His Lordship officiated at the feast of the Immaculate Conception of our Holy Mother assisted by Very Rev. Father Cyril Gamini Fernando, Episcopal Vicar of Colombo (Eastern Region) in the presence of a large gathering of devotees from Waga parish.

Rev. Fathers Crispin Leo, M.D. Anthony, Francis Jayakody, Gyon Nonis, Srinath Manoj Perera and Aruna Lakshiri graced the occasion. Venerable Labugama Medhalakara thera, Chief Incumbent of the Kahahene Temple also participated in highlighting the religious amity in the area. The land was donated by the family of late John Rupasinghe.

The event was successfully organized by Rev Fr. Prasanna Sanjeewa with the Welikanna parishioners.

Anton Paaris



His Lordship Maxwell Silva laying the foundation with Very Rev. Fr. Cyril Gamini Fernando and Rev. Fr. Prasanna Sanjeewa, Parish Priest, Waga.

St. Mary's School, Maggona



Christmas Carols presented by St. Mary's School, Maggona were held at the Rev. Fr. Marcelin Jayakody Memorial Hall recently. The chief guest on this occasion was Rev. Fr. Ishan Prameena, Parish Priest, Maggona.

D. Anselm Fernando

Holy Father's Christmas Message



Dear brothers and sisters listening to me here in Rome and throughout the world, I joyfully proclaim the message of Christmas: God became man; He came to dwell among us. God is not distant: He is "Emmanuel," God-with-us. He is no stranger: He has a face, the face of Jesus. This message is ever new, ever surprising, for it surpasses even our most daring hope.

First of all, because it is not merely a proclamation: It is an event, a happening, which credible witnesses saw, heard and touched in the person of Jesus of Nazareth! Being in His presence, observing His works and hearing His words, they recognised in Jesus the Messiah; and seeing him risen, after His crucifixion, they were certain that He was true man and true God, the only-begotten Son come from the Father, full of grace and truth (cf. Jn.1:14).

"The Word be-

came flesh." Before this revelation we once more wonder: How can this be? The Word and the flesh are mutually opposed realities; how can the eternal and almighty Word become a frail and mortal man? There is only one answer: Love. Those who love desire to share with the beloved, they want to be one with the beloved, and Sacred Scripture shows us the great love story of God for His people which culminated in Jesus Christ.

God in fact does not change: He is faithful to Himself. He who created the world is the same one who called Abraham and revealed His name to Moses: "I am who I am ... the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob ... a God merciful and gracious, abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness (cf. Ex 3:14-15; 34:6). God does not change; He is Love, ever and always. In Himself He is communion, unity in Trinity, and all His words and works are di-

rected to communion. The Incarnation is the culmination of creation. When Jesus, the Son of God Incarnate, was formed in the womb of Mary by the will of the Father and the working of the Holy Spirit, creation reached its high point. The ordering principle of the universe, the Logos, began to exist in the world, in a certain time and space.

"The Word became flesh." The light of this truth is revealed to those who receive it in faith, for it is a mystery of love. Only those who are open to love are enveloped in the light of Christmas. So it was on that night in Bethlehem, and so it is today. The Incarnation of the Son of God is an event which occurred within history, while at the same time transcending history." In the night of the world a new light was kindled, one which lets itself be seen by the simple eyes of faith, by the meek and humble hearts of those who await the Saviour.

If the truth were a mere mathematical formula, in some sense it would impose itself by its own power. But if Truth is Love, it calls for faith, for the "yes" of our hearts. And what do our hearts, in effect, seek, if not a Truth which is also Love? Children seek it with their questions, so disarming and stimulating; young people seek it in their eagerness to discover the deepest meaning of their life; adults seek it in order to guide and sustain their commitments in the fam-

ily and the workplace; the elderly seek it in order to grant completion to their earthly existence.

"The Word became flesh." The proclamation of Christmas is also a light for all peoples, for the collective journey of humanity. "Emmanuel," God-with-us, has come as King of justice and peace. We know that His Kingdom is not of this world, and yet it is more important than all the kingdoms of this world. It is like the heaven of humanity: Were it lacking, the energy to work for true development would flag: The impulse to work together for the common good, in the disinterested service of our neighbour, in the peaceful struggle for justice. Belief in the God who desired to share in our history constantly encourages us in our own commitment to that his-

tory, for all its contradictions. It is a source of hope for everyone whose dignity is offended and violated, since the one born in Bethlehem came to set every man and woman free from the source of all enslavement.

May the love of "God-with-us" grant perseverance to all those Christian communities enduring discrimination and persecution, and inspire political and religious leaders to be committed to full respect for the religious freedom of all.

Dear brothers and sisters, "the Word became flesh," he came to dwell among us; He is Emmanuel, the God who became close to us. Together let us contemplate this great mystery of love; let our hearts be filled with the light which shines in the stable of Bethlehem!

To everyone, a Merry Christmas!



"When a Child is Born"

COLOMBO CATHOLIC PRESS

Notice

The Colombo Catholic Press will be closed for business from Friday, December 21, and will reopen on Monday, December 31, 2012

Gift a Smile for Christmas

A Roman Catholic group in a social media website has organised an event to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and bring the seasonal joy and warmth to the children of Mother Teresa's Children's Home, Moratuwa on Sunday, December 30, 2012.

Alunch, some light events and a prize giving is planned to make the day a brighter and a happy one for the children.

The group cordially invites all Catholics to join hands with them, "Gift a Smile for Christmas" and call all generous hearts to contribute



"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me"

- Matthew 25:40

to this event. For more information please contact Randika 0777887678 Niluka 0777337253 or Ravi 0774308817

SUNDAY PUNCH

by Camillus



0 little town of Bethlehem!



In the little Welsh town of Bethlehem, the postal service does a roaring trade before Christmas.

The Post Office in this tiny Welsh village of 'BETHLEHEM' has been swamped with customers who want to have their Christmas cards stamped with its unique postmark.

Thousands of visitors from all over the

world will be flocking to the village for their Christmas mail to be stamped with the festive frank.

Postmaster Mike Williams said: 'This is a very busy time for our Bethlehem branch.

'People come from all over the UK and abroad to hand deliver their cards to make sure they get the Bethlehem handstamp.

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Christmas is at the crib



"When a Child is Born"

By Jeannette Cabraal

Neeliya came down the stairs in a resplendent midnight blue ensemble little beyond the bounds of modesty, her stilleto heel tick-tocking on the stairs, the balustrades of which were gaily decorated with artificial holly, and ivy and mistletoe, giving a festive air.

"Rohan has planned to go for the Christmas Eve dance at the Mount. It was a sudden arrangement," she muttered "I couldn't very well refuse him could I? I bought this kit this afternoon as we closed half day today."

"In this attire? Are you crazy? And anyway what about the Midnight Mass? You'll be back for it won't you?" Neeliya responded with a peal of laughter "Ammi, how can you be so dense? A dance goes on till the small hours of the morning. We'll be ushering in Christmas there at 12 midnight."

"Gyrating in comic clown caps on a sacred night like this? Impossible!" roared the father. Just then there was the toot of a horn, as a car glided to a halt outside the gate and Rohan almost leaped out in his enthusiasm to greet his fiancée, waved a cheery hand to his

it would be the same this year too, before their daughter left their nest to start a new life. But it had taken a very different turn and they were perplexed. They were tradition bound. The younger generation breached all tradition.

Rohan and Neeliya entered the dance hall in a flush of spirits and was just taking in the ambience when Rohan's father's good friend Arun and his wife accosted them. "Rohan, what are you doing here? Is your fiancée not a Christian? I thought you Christians were expected to attend the midnight service. Your mother and father have always been very particular about it. I am very surprised as to how you got away." The wife cast uncomplimentary glances at Neeliya almost frowning at her fashionable dress.

It was then that Rohan glanced at Neeliya and realised that her attire would draw unwanted advances. He flushed and moved away with Neeliya, merging with the crowd and then whispering to Neeliya made an abashed exit. "Let's come for the dance on the 31st night" said Rohan. "Tonight we should be at the crib, Uncle Arun was right. Let's get back as quickly as possible. But first let's get back home and change."

The church was packed to capacity. There was no room in the parents' pew, Rohan and Neeliya quietly crept up to the vicinity of the crib spotted by Neeliya's parents who heaved a sigh of relief at this almost miraculous turn of events. It was 12 midnight. The church bells were pealing joyfully. The priest was chanting "Gloria in Excelsis Deo."

The church was packed to capacity. There was no room in the parents' pew, Rohan and Neeliya quietly crept up to the vicinity of the crib spotted by Neeliya's parents who heaved a sigh of relief at this almost miraculous turn of events. It was 12 midnight. The church bells were pealing joyfully. The priest was chanting "Gloria in Excelsis Deo."



As she stepped into the drawing room, she spotted the crib occupying pride of place, with its glittering illuminated star, which involuntarily caused a twitch of her facial muscles. Her parents, younger sister and brother were seated together on a sofa watching a Christmas play on TV.

"Don't tell me you're going to wear this for the midnight Mass," exclaimed her shocked mother, while her father was speechless with dismay. "No ammi," said Neeliya rather embarrassed at the open disapproval of her ball dress.

in-laws to be, and whisked her away much to the consternation of the parents. The brother and sister smirked and tittered and were shouted at by both parents. The father switched off the TV, leaned back against the sofa, simply shocked at this totally unprecedented turn of events. Unshed tears glistening in her eyes, the mother quickly went in to set the table for dinner.

It was the family tradition, on both sides as far as they could remember, to attend the Midnight Mass as a family together. They took it for granted

Mary and Her Unborn Baby

The Angel's greeting, "Peace be with you!"
Would not set Mary at peace.
But anxiety and tension at the words -
"You'll bear a son! The Son of God!"

The truth of her heart outspoken,
"How come? I've no relation with man?"
On Mary's mind,
The divine message seemed to perplex
Against social norms - The Law of Moses!
Alone she had to tread her path,
Keeping all things in her heart.

Descending the hills of Judea,
The God-Man fetus voiced:
"Mother, you were imbued with love

Three months' caring and catering
To Elizabeth your cousin
Despite your own deep anguish.

The dream of Joseph, the Righteous Man,
Cleared all doubts, and he -
Would take Mary into his home.
"Rejoice Mother! For I have my Foster
Father."

The Son's voice within her womb echoed
across the hills:
"Mom, I'm with you throughout your days -
You are the greatest Mother ever created.
I love You Mother."

Antonette Patternot

THE CATHOLIC WEEKLY OF SRI LANKA
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EDITORIAL

December 23, 2012

The Message of Christmas

Christmas is round the corner- just two days more. What is Christmas? We know it is the birthday of Jesus Christ. Who is Jesus Christ? The Bible tells us that He is the Son of God- the Word that existed always. He was living in heaven with all the splendour and happiness there, with all the glory of God radiating from Him (Hebrews 1:3). It also says that all things hold together in Him (Colossians 1:17). It also says that by him were all things created (Colossians 1:16). And before He was born, He was the Mighty God and the Father of Eternity (Isaiah 9:6). Theologians speak of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ. That simply means that before Bethlehem, the Son of God existed from all eternity in heaven. Not as a pauper or a beggar, but in glorious splendor.

But He decides to come down to earth. He was rich in eternity. He became poor in time. He left heaven for a remote village, to be born of an obscure teenage peasant girl in a stable, wrapped in rags, placed in a feeding-trough instead of a crib. So Jesus is born in a manger with only the animals around, no doctors, no nurses, no hospital. Instead He is born in a manger and has to be wrapped in swaddling clothes instead of diapers to keep Him warm. There is no one to attend on Mary. Instead of the fuss and attention a mother gets when she delivers a child, Mary is asked to leave for Egypt to save her child, for Herod had decided to kill all the new born babies. So there is a frightened father, an exhausted mother, a dirty stable and a baby in swaddling clothes and it is winter-time. There He is, ignored by the mighty and powerful—the Son of God who had come to dwell among His people sharing their sorrows and joys to show His love for them. This is the message of Christmas - a simple message that God has come to live among His people. How his people would treat Him is another story - the story of Good Friday. The story is so simple that you know it must be true. Only God would have done it that way.

He became poor. Not, He was made poor. That is what happens to us. We are made poor by circumstances. But He himself, of His own free will, became poor. That is something we would never do. He voluntarily gave up the riches of heaven for the poverty of earth. He who was richer than any man has ever been, gave it up freely and became poorer than many men that have lived.

We understand riches. And we understand poverty. But to choose poverty, is beyond us and something we would never do. But that is the heart of the Gospel. The richest person in the universe, of His own free will, became poor to live among His people.

It is called the Incarnation - John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." The phrase "became flesh" really means wrapping himself in human flesh. That is what happened at Bethlehem. It was God entering the human race in the form of a man.

Why? Because He wanted to live among men and tell them that God loved them. He was and is God but He takes the human form. This is the perfect way to communicate one's love to those whom we love - to live with them and share our lives with them.

That is what God did. He did not send a messenger to say that God loved man but came down Himself to say so and show His love to the human race. He did the one thing we could understand. God Himself came down and entered the human race.

We would not have done it that way. Consider the political leader who wants to tell his people about some important things which he feels they should know about the country. He would call a press conference, or hold a big public meeting and ask the TV stations to cover it and show it on television. He would then proceed to tell the people the important message he wants to tell them. But that is not God's way. First the Angel Gabriel appears to Mary, a poor virgin who is betrothed to Joseph. Neither can they understand the Angel's message but they believe that all things are possible for God and hence what the Angel says must be true. So God when He wanted to speak to His people decides to come down from heaven and live among them and show His love for them by His actions. He would heal the sick, cure the deaf and blind and restore life to those special ones He liked.

All will end well in Emmanuel

By Prof. Anton Meemana

Incarnation in Human History

Incarnation of God is not an abstract event. God took flesh in order to relate to us personally and redeem us specifically. Incarnation is the re-incarnation of hope. Incarnation is the divine manifestation, the divine indwelling in our midst, par excellence. The intelligibility of the Incarnation is infinite.

The mystery of Incarnation is the unfathomable mystery entering into human history in a decisive and definitive manner; that is, the mystery began to indwell in history. Incarnation has radically altered our understanding of time and space. With the coming of Christ, time has become teleological, eschatological and Christological. Time and space has been Christified and deified in order to facilitate the sanctification of humanity.

Incarnation transforms the whole universe into admiration, adoration, aspiration and appreciation. Incarnation has hemmed us in, engulfed us, embraced us and enveloped us permanently. Incarnation is our real protective skin. Incarnation has liberated us, redeemed us, without the help of reincarnation.

Light and Darkness

It is the light of Incarnated light that enlightens everyone. In that light, we see the evil deeds of human beings. Evil deeds are exposed not in order to condemn them, but in order to redeem them. Real expose is always redemptive and liberating. Unexposed deeds are unredeemed and unfulfilled deeds. Wicked deeds are the seeds of redemption and temptations are means for purification and sanctification.

Light exposes the nakedness, wickedness, and crookedness of darkness in history. Light is not afraid of darkness. Darkness hesitates, wavers, doubts itself in the presence of light. Light is the delight of those who live in darkness and have come to realise it.

Each person has to grapple with the myriad meanings of Incarnation. It offers infinite possibilities for living our lives joyfully, starting everything anew and reorienting our perspectives.

Humility, Titles and False Securities

Incarnation is a fruit of Divine humility. The perspective of humility is the perspective of eternity. Humility is letting go of all our false securities, bloated and swollen egos and stripping off of all titles, prestige and unnecessary and unhealthy attachment to them. Humility is daily death to our falseness. Until we practise humility, like Christ, we cannot begin to live properly.

It is to serve without the comfort and security of an office or a privileged position



"The true measure of freedom is our intrinsic capacity to love people who hate us, insult us, ridicule us, slander us, make fun out of us, spread rumours about us, gossip about us, abhor us, back-bite us, put us down and downgrade us. To love them, bless them, pray for them, serve them, and help them without expecting anything in return is the very depth of one's freedom and a manifestation of one's humility"

in society. True individual identity is beyond one's worldly titles. We find our true identity in intimacy with God. Then God penetrates straight through our cloaks, uniforms and gowns into our innermost soul and heart.

Christ is beyond all titles and offices and therefore supremely free in order to serve us. A server of humanity is the real deserver of Christ. A real disciple of Christ is the real celebrator of Christmas.

To be human is to be humble. As Saint Teresa of Avila says "humility is truth." The one who lives humbly lives nimbly. Nothing in life is exaggerated or minimised. Truth about ourselves, our own lives, our own situations makes us radically free. Humility is radical honesty about ourselves. In humility, one is in touch with true-self, real-self, original-self, authentic-self and divine-self. Interiorly free life is life-giving all the time. Life lived in truth is truly life-giving.

A free life flows and flares forth from deep within, from the deepest kernel and core of one's heart, one's whole existence.

Truth, freedom, love and humility are not isolated and separate virtues but dif-

ferent facets of the same diamond. Life lived in freedom is very pleasing to God indeed and such a person is doing justice to his or her God-given life. The splendour of one's humility is the fragrance of one's humanity. One's humanity radiates one's humility brilliantly.

Insults, Freedom and Love

The true measure of freedom is our intrinsic capacity to love people who hate us, insult us, ridicule us, slander us, make fun out of us, spread rumours about us, gossip about us, abhor us, back-bite us, put us down and downgrade us. To love them, bless them, pray for them, serve them, and help them without expecting anything in return is the very depth of one's freedom and a manifestation of one's humility.

The more they abhor us, all the more we must love them. Those who hate us deeply offer us an evangelical opportunity. On behalf of them all, we must witness to the gospel values ardently. The gospel is the only spell that sets us free, liberates us and heals us. Christmas is the Incarnation of that gospel in the midst of us.

Every hater, vicious

gossip, slanderer, pervert, character-assassin and back-biter offers us a rare opportunity for radical spiritual growth. Grace under pressure is the real spiritual treasure. Divine grace is constantly facilitated in and through them. Slanderous tongue is a spiritually prosperous opportunity. Every situation contains an evangelical dimension.

Insults are means for purification, ridicules are means for sanctification. The greater the challenges and hardships in life are, the better for one's spiritual journey. Great losses are grand lessons.

God shatters us in order to make us glitter. All that glitters now has once been shattered.

Even in the midst of confusion, spiritual dryness, emptiness, aimlessness, frustrations, disappointments, God is ever active in our lives and we need a little patience and perspective to find God in them. Only where God seems to be absent, can God be truly found and glimpsed. His apparent absence is his active presence. By being absent, He truly becomes present in our midst. God is very Zen in that sense. God is the greatest and profoundest Zen master. At each second of our lives, God's active presence is very Zen. God zens in order to make sense.

Living Gracefully Under Pressure

Difficulties are opportunities. Crises are guises for spiritual transformation. Union and communion with God enhance our solidarity and connectivity with our fellow human beings. God is the ultimate foundation of our common humanity. God is the Gordian Knot that ties us together. To cut that knot is to be scattered, shattered and littered as a human family. Union and communion with God are the unity and universality of us all.

The more we possess material things, the more anxious and restless we become. The more we have, the emptier we become. But there is a permanent solution to this emptiness, that is, one should get one's true identity from God; God is the true identity-giver. The one who clings to God, the one who cleaves to God, the one who clicks to God and the one who connects to God need nothing else. The one who clings to God sings forever and the one who clings to God never slings. We cleave to God in order never to leave. God is everything one can have in this life and the life



"When a Child is Born"

next and without God one is absolutely nothing.

God indwells amongst the humble. God takes such delight and deep pleasure in them. One of the ways to remain humble is to genuinely live with and care for the poorest of the poor. God indweldest amongst the slum dwellers.

Part of holiness is our daily and increasing capacity to accept and expect bigger challenges and to do gracefully what we habitually do not like to do.

Authentic Humanity and God

Humility is another name for authentic humanity. One cannot cultivate one's deep humanity, one's humaneness without cultivating humility. Humility is the direct channel to God; in it, one can quite accurately glimpse the divine ebbs and flows. In proportion to our humility, the divine grace ebbs away or overflows. Humble people are truly nimble people. The humble person is the freest person. The quality of one's love is in direct proportion to one's humility. Infinite humility gives birth to infinite love. Jesus was the greatest lover ever for he was the humblest forever. Out of humility, he became one of us in order to elevate us. In other words, God became human in order to make us Divine.

Our capacity to love is in proportion to our humility. Proud people are not capable of loving truly. Pride and love are diametrically opposed to each other. Pride aborts our innermost, intrinsic, inherent and interior capacity to love. Proud people live intimately frozen and absolutely boring lives.

What is deep within us radiates in all directions. It envelops, permeates, embraces the whole outer persona and everything else around about us. What is deep within surrounds what is without. What is incarnated radiates universally. Christmas is the spread of that fragrance everywhere.

"Our capacity to love is in proportion to our humility. Proud people are not capable of loving truly. Pride and love are diametrically opposed to each other. Pride aborts our innermost, intrinsic, inherent and interior capacity to love. Proud people live intimately frozen and absolutely boring lives"

6



"When a Child is Born"

“... and laid him in a manger” (Luke 2:7)

STORY OF THE MANGER

Phatne

Caused by circumstances and well intended by Providence, Jesus is born, as Luke narrates, in a location quite peculiar and unanticipated, “and she gave birth to a son, her first born and wrapped him in strips of cloth and laid him down in a *phatne*, since there was no place for them in the lodgings” (2:7). Away from its peculiarity, it turns out to be a ‘sign’. The angel tells the shepherds in the fields, “and this (is) to you the sign: You will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth and lying in a *phatne*” (2:12). To the shepherds, it never stands peculiar. It is where they are most comfortable at home. They respond to the Word of God in haste “and they found out both Mary and Joseph with the baby lying in the *phatne*” (2:16).



Stall or Manger?

In all these three places, Luke uses the Greek feminine noun *phatne* which can be translated as either ‘manger’ or ‘stall’. Where then, is Jesus laid down? Is it in a manger or in a stall? We will explore the possibilities.

i. A ‘Stall’ is for tying up animals. It is found either outdoors or indoors. Luke contrasts *phatne*, the place for animals, with “lodgings” the place for people. It should then be ‘stall’.

ii. A ‘Manger’ is a trough for feeding animals. A wooden manger is movable and placed on the ground where animals are, or it is a cavity in a low rock shelf, being scooped out of the rock. A child wrapped in strips of cloth, is laid in a cradle. The Lucan picture of wrapping the Baby and laying Him down, suits a ‘manger’ as it is cradle-like.

R. E. Brown is correct to say in his monumental work *The Birth of the Messiah* (abbreviated as *The Birth* in our work), “Luke does not give us enough context to decide” (*The Birth*, 399) and “The precise picture that he wishes to convey is not clear” (*The Birth*, 418). Hence it is with probability that we use, in this treatise, the word, ‘manger.’

Ox and Donkey?

Does Luke mention animals? He does not explicitly mention the presence of any animal. But *phatne* – whether it is ‘stall’ or ‘manger’ – implies animals. Brown observes, “... both stall and manger imply animals.” (*The Birth*, 399). Both ‘stall’ and ‘manger’ are places for beasts of burden like the ox and donkey.

In the Christmas crib, popularised by St. Francis of Assisi, which had its beginnings at midnight Mass at Greccio in 1223, we find oxen and



donkeys surrounding a manger. Why do we find them there? They have been ‘introduced’, we must say, into the nativity scene, as they are not explicitly mentioned in the text of Luke.

How are these animals introduced?

How have they walked into the crib?

First, the Lucan story refers to *phatne* and therefore, that implies, animals. Second, LXX (Septuagint) Isaiah 1:3 refers to ox and donkey, “The ox knows its owner; and the donkey knows the *phatne* of its lord; but Israel has not known me; my people have not understood me.” It is in this way that both, ox and donkey, have walked into the nativity scene and taken their pride of place.



Prophecy Reversed

The ‘manger’ appears thrice in this Birth Story of Luke. It is also given as “the sign.” Hence, it plays quite an important role in the Story. As Brown remarks, “Curiously, Luke seems more interested in telling his audience where Mary laid the newborn baby!” (*The Birth*, 418) What could be the significance of mentioning it? What does this ‘sign’ indicate? It is not a miraculous sign. But it is, as Brown defines, “a constitutive part of the revelation” (*The Birth*, 419) and so, what does it reveal beyond the surface meaning of the poverty, simplicity and humility of Jesus?

We must comb the Sacred Scriptures. In LXX Isaiah 1:3 God lamented and complained against Israel, “The ox knows its owner; and the donkey knows the *phatne* of its lord; but Israel has not known me; my people have not understood me.” The chosen people in their infidelity had refused the salvation offered by God.

But this Isaian dictum is now repealed and reversed, as C. H. Giblin suggests in “Reflections on the Sign of the Manger,” *CBQ* 29 (1967) 99-101. When the Good News of the birth of their Lord is proclaimed to the shepherds they go, find the Baby in the manger and praise God, “So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child ... Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and

seen, just as it had been told to them” (2:16.17.20). They, God’s people, at last, come to know, understand and recognise their Lord and His manger. Now they accept the salvation offered by God.



From the Manger to the Cross

Jesus in the manger can be interpreted in another way as well. Luke is interested in the theme of food. Jesus is oft engaged in table fellowship. Now Jesus is in the manger, a feeding place. Hence He is “sustenance for the world” as R. J. Karris proposes in “The Gospel according to Luke,” *NJBC*, 683. Indeed, Jesus sustains the starving humanity – the humanity starving for redemption. This may have Eucharistic overtones. In future, Jesus will say, “This is *MY BODY*, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me. This cup is the new covenant in *MY BLOOD*, which will be shed for you” (22:19-20). On the Cross, He will accomplish this with His Body broken and Blood shed. Thus Jesus in the manger or stall, foreshadows Jesus at the Last Supper, on the Cross as well as in the sacred Bread and Wine on the altar. The Mystery of the Incarnation thus prepares for the

Rev. Fr. Don Anton Saman Hettiarachchi

Paschal Mystery and the Eucharistic Mystery. The Birth thus heralds the Last Supper and the Passion. Christmas is thus culminated during Holy Week and perpetuated in the Eucharist.

Message for Today

That Jesus is laid in a manger or stall is caused by the circumstances of crowded lodgings, “... since there was no place for them in the lodgings.” The place of animals has enough privacy and so it is also the best place to use at that time of emergency. It is also true that since Jesus is laid in a manger or stall, the poor and sinful shepherds are able to visit Him.

Nevertheless we must also remember that there are no accidents with God. Hence, the laying down of the Baby Jesus, in a manger or stall has already been intended by God. He intends the condescension of His Son. He intends that Jesus bravely comes down to the level of sinful humanity in order to be in solidarity with it and thereby, to save it. It is a courageous act on the part of Jesus who descends to earth, and hence, to be admired and imitated by us, His disciples of today.

Bethlehem's Star

Chorus

Bethlehem's Star shines brightly on high
Glorious star illumining the sky
Peacefully streaming its silvery light
Radiantly gleaming on this beautiful night.

Lo! In a bleak and bare cattleshed
Laid in a manger with straw for a bed
Calmly reposes a wee infant child
Jesus our Saviour so tender and mild.

Mary enfolds her Babe in the stall
Virgin of virgins, the purest of all
Lovingly gazing with rapturous joy
On the dear Infant her sweet Baby Boy.

Joseph most just most faithful and true
Spouse of the Virgin, her guardian too
Fondly beholds the Divine Babe so fair
Given by God to his fatherly care.

Angels from Heav'n now joyously sing
Gladly to shepherds good tidings they bring
Shepherds all haste to the Baby most sweet
Kings from the East offer gifts at His Feet

May the Lord Christ who came to this earth
Sanctify all who proclaim His dear birth
May He send showers of peace from above
May He enrich all our hearts with His love.

Rita Irene Fernando

HAPPINESS HAS A FACE AND NAME

7

The closer one gets to an important event, the more his expectation is awakened. The birth of Jesus is the greatest historical event. He divides history into two parts: Before Christ and after Christ. It was that crucial moment when God enters into the world of men, to live among them and save them from sin.

Our hearts should then long for our Lord to make us have a joyful, attentive and devout anticipation for Christmas, and celebrate it with brimming joy.

The Prophet Zephaniah spoke of the overflowing joy in Jerusalem because the Lord has saved the rest of Israel. "Shout for joy, O daughter Zion! Sing joyfully, O Israel! Be glad and exult with all your heart, O daughter Jerusalem!"

"On that day, it shall be said to Jerusalem: Fear not, O Zion, be not discouraged! The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty Saviour; he will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love, he will sing joyfully because of you, as one sings at festivals" (Zeph. 3:14-18a).

Christmas is a celebration of the coming of the Saviour of the world. The Scriptures invite us to "Shout for joy... Be glad and exult with all your heart... The Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty Saviour..."

God's salvation in Christ is a free gift. Like any gift, it is not something that we need to earn. Pope Benedict XVI teaches that the Incarnation of the Son of God is meant not only to save us from sin, but rather to bring God to man. Can there be closer union between the Divine and the human, than God assuming our humanity in order that we partake of His Divinity?

Jesus therefore is the source of our lasting joy: Christian joy. Christian joy has a face and a name: Jesus Christ.



"Kaire"

Pope Benedict XVI, in the latest volume of his series of books entitled *"Jesus of Nazareth,"* invites us to look more closely at the story of the Annunciation to Mary of the birth of Jesus. First we will consider the angel's message, then Mary's answer.

The angelic salutation's striking feature is that he does not address Mary with the usual Hebrew salutation 'Shalom'—peace be with you—but with the Greek greeting formula "kaire," which we might well translate with the word "Hail," as in the Church's Marian prayer, pieced together from the words of the annunciation narrative (cf. Lk 1:28, 42).

Instead of using her Hebrew name, the Angel says "Hail, full of grace." It is something like "kehari-tomene" in Greek, whose root could be traced to the word "kaire": rejoice!

This Greek word "kaire" reappears during the Holy Night on the lips of the angel who says to the shepherds: "I bring you good news of a great joy" (Lk 2:10). It appears again—in John's Gospel—at the encounter with the Risen Lord: "The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord" (Jh 20:20). Jesus' farewell discourses in Saint John's Gospel present a theology of joy, which as it were illuminates the depth of this word. "I will see you again and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you" (16:22).

Joy appears in these texts as the particular gift of the Holy Spirit, the true gift of the Redeemer. So a chord is sounded with the angel's salutation which then resounds throughout the life of the Church. Its content is also present in the fundamental word that serves to designate the entire Christian message: Gospel. This word could be a combination of "God" and "spell," "God's spell," contracted into Gospel, good news.



"Rejoice"

"Rejoice"—as we have seen—is in the first instance a Greek greeting, and to that extent this pronouncement by the angel immediately opens the door to the peoples of the world: the universality of

the Christian message becomes evident. And yet this word is also taken from the Old Testament, and thus it expresses the complete continuity of Biblical salvation history.

Some authors have shown that Gabriel's greeting to Mary takes up and brings into the present the prophecy of Zephaniah: "Rejoice, daughter of Zion; shout, Israel ... The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst (cf. Zeph 3:14-17; *Stanislas Lyonnet and René Laurentin*)."

The essential reason for the daughter of Zion to rejoice, the Holy Father points out, is stated in the text itself: "The Lord is in your midst" (Zeph 3:15,17). Literally it says: "He is in your womb."

Here Zephaniah is alluding to a passage in the Book of Exodus which speaks of God dwelling in the Ark of the Covenant as dwelling "In Israel's womb" (cf. *Laurentin, Structure et Théologie*, pp. 70f., with reference to Ex 33:3 and 34:9). This same word reappears in Gabriel's message to Mary: "You will conceive in your womb" (Lk 1:31).

Whatever view is taken regarding the details of these parallels, there is clearly an inner resemblance between the two messages. Mary appears as the daughter of Zion in person. The Zion prophecies are fulfilled in her in an unexpected way. Mary becomes the Ark of the Covenant, the place where the Lord truly dwells.

"Rejoice, full of grace!" One further aspect of the greeting "kaire" is worthy of note: The connection between joy and grace. In Greek, the two words joy and grace (*kará* and *káris*) are derived from the same root. Therefore, the Pope concludes, joy and grace belong together.

This unmistakably unveils for us the inner link between true happiness and God's grace. The grace of God infused in our souls through the Sacraments and the Lord's presence in the soul in the state of grace is the deepest source of human joy. Yet, how many or how few are those who succeeded to discover this wonder? Countless people go for unbridled search for riches, pleasures and power to find happiness. When all is said and done, the only thing they hit upon is inner tension, anxiety and restlessness. True joy is found elsewhere: True joy is to have "God with us": the Emmanuel, Jesus Christ.

The Third Sunday of Advent is known as "Gaudete Sunday." "Gaudete" is the Latin word for "rejoice!" As the celebration of our Saviour's arrival draws closer and the season of preparation grows shorter, the Church invites us to tap into that joy.



"Love"

What is Incarnation if not the expression of God's love for his people? Love is, by its very nature, an act of self-giving and the more perfect the love the more total is the self donation. Jesus comes to save us from sin by giving Himself totally up to the last drop of His Blood. That is why He could truly affirm that there is no greater love than this: Than one giving his life for another.

There is a Christmas carol that goes: "He came down to earth in order to suffer" for us. How different is His life's plan compared to ours, St Josemaria exclaimed. We were born to live this life and enjoy everlasting happiness in heaven. Jesus, on the other hand, was born to die for us so that we could attain that eternal joy.

Is not love the source of man's greatest joy on earth? We love what is good; we love people who are good. If it is so, then the higher the object of our love is, the greater is the "good" we love and the happier we would be.

Remember what Jesus asked that rich young man in the Gospel, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone." The Lord is the greatest good. We are not surprised then to see that the happiest people on earth are those who love God with their whole strength, mind and heart. Moreover, the more total and unconditional is our love for God, the more intensely we feel the joy that comes from above. It is a delight that withstands sufferings and hardships in this life, since its root goes deeper and transcends the visible world. And we are all called by God to share in that

Rev. Fr. Daniel Icatlo

love and joy. Sadly though, not so many discover this profound happiness.



"Joy"

"When a Child is Born"



The Lord certainly wants us happy. It is therefore up to each one of us to draw out joy from the wellspring of ecstasy. How do we do that? By cultivating a more mature personal relationship with Christ, our Saviour, we draw out happiness from its very source. The more mature is our love for Jesus, the more fully and lasting is the joy we experience.

The path to a deeper friendship with the Lord, in turn, involves three things: Knowing, loving, and serving Jesus Christ.

First, we grow in our knowledge of Him through prayer and study. Regular dealings with the Lord in the Eucharist, as well as, reading the Word of God intensify the fervor of our charity.

Second, we love Jesus by obeying his commands. It goes beyond feeling something for God. Like human love, it must be shown with deeds of affection. Those manifestations of love generally take the form of doing the will of the one we love. When it comes to Divine Love it is expressed in obedience to His will, as the Lord says, "He who loves me keeps My commandments." Just as the Lord obeyed the designs of the Father by becoming man to suffer and die on the Cross, we too, through obedience to our Father God become more Christ like.

Third, we will serve the Lord by loving and serving the people around us. As St John puts it, unless we love our neighbour whom we can see, we cannot claim to love the Lord whom we cannot see.

The recurring theme of Christian joy is expressed also in the letter of St Paul to the Philippians. Since the Lord is near in coming, therefore we have to be happy. "Brothers and sisters: Rejoice in the Lord always. I shall say it again: Rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near."

"Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:4-7)."



"Expectation"

As they saw and heard St. John the Baptist, the people lived in anticipation for the Messiah. "Now the people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ." John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy even to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand to clear His threshing floor and to gather the wheat into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire" (Lk 3: 15-18). Exhorting them in many other ways, he preached good news to the people.

The expectation for Christmas that the Church wants is cheerful, filled with solicitude and devotion. This means fostering the desire to receive forgiveness for our sins through contrition and confession. It also means striving to help others live in joyful anticipation, which is what we call the Christian Apostolate. It consists in leading souls closer to God by word and example. We do not have to look far to this. We can do apostolate with those who are around us: Family, relations, acquaintances, classmates in school or colleagues at work.

Holy Mary, the Virgin of Hope, and St Joseph, wish to awaken us from the drowsiness of sin and fill our heart with joyful, solicitous and devout anticipation as we approach Christmas.



"When a Child is Born"

By Rev. Fr. Leopold Ratnasekra

Christmas 2012 is special, for we are celebrating the Birth of Jesus Christ the Saviour during the 'Year of Faith' declared by Pope Benedict XVI.

Christmas in its core is nothing but the Incarnation which is a mystery of faith par excellence! St. John the beloved apostle announces this perennial and popular Christian festival commemorating the wonderful Mystery of the Incarnation and held worldwide at the year's end, in the Prologue of his Gospel with the words: "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 truthfrom his fullness we have all received grace upon grace" (John 1:14-16). It is part and parcel of a beautiful hymn about Christ embedded in very early Christian Liturgy proclaiming a radical mystery of Faith. Much earlier in the written collection of the New Testament writings, we find St. Paul mentioning the dawn of the fullness of time of Grace and divine intervention in history when he writes in one of his major letters: "But, when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, in order to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as children" (Galatians 4:4-5). And so, divinity had assumed humanity and taken on its dignity making itself similar to us in all things, except sin.

Creed at Mass

It is true that today the idolatrous tide of commercialism viciously continues to violate the profound mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God, a truth of faith that we confess every Sunday when we recite together the Creed at Mass. It has gone so pitiable, that even many believers have lost touch with the august nature of this Christian truth. However, from those of devout heart and serene mind the depths of the mystery can never be snatched away. In fact, we know that it is a divine intervention that elevates and gives an unparalleled dignity to our sinful human nature. We have thus become partakers of the divine nature as St. Peter teaches in his letter (2 Peter 1:4). St. John paraphrases it more poignantly when he writes: "We declare to you what

was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life – this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it (1 John 1:1-2). No wonder therefore, that it is an event that cascades with joy and jubilant exultation.

Mary, the Mother of Jesus herself gave vent to her exuberant feelings when she sang on her visit to cousin Elizabeth for the first time her "Magnificat" – my soul glorifies the Lord for he has done great things for me and Holy is his name. Simeon, the seer of Jerusalem temple in anxious expectation of the Messiah to be revealed, took the child of Nazareth in his hands and with a spirit that burst forth in thanksgiving exclaimed: "Now you can dismiss your servant, O Lord, for my eyes have seen Your salvation." It was grace palpable in his very hands and eyes glowing in contemplation of the Word made flesh! And hear a mother's cry: "Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breast that suckled you!" that is found in three out of the four gospels. Two curious disciples of John the Baptist struck by the imposing personality of Jesus who had descended into the waters of the Jordan to be baptized, followed him at his beckoning and stayed with him that night that provided them with their first long encounter with the Lord. John the Baptist himself beheld the Son of God and did he not exclaim: "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world." He was stunned to see the Spirit descend upon him, as he came out of the water after the baptism.

This is the real story of Christmas ---- the unique birth of the one who means so much to us, indeed our all. It is a far cry, then, from the celluloid Christmas and its external pomp, glow and glitter that continue to swindle the worldlings' imagination. Ask a simple devotee who makes it to the humble crib of wattle and hay. Watch him kiss with profound emotion and great devotion the statue of the little babe placed in the manger, and you will realise what Christmas really is.

Paradoxical Experience

Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) an eminent Lutheran

theologian and student of religious anthropology in his work "The idea of the Holy," now considered a classic, says, that the sense of the "Sacred" or the "Holy" is both fearful to behold and fascinatingly attractive at the same time. It is a paradoxical experience. Moses realised it at Mount Sinai at the Burning Bush and so does Joshua his successor, when about to step into Jericho, the border area of the Promised Land. Mystics like Saints Francis of Assisi, Teresa

kept in the innermost recesses of her mind and heart!

Let us ponder

As we celebrate Christmas during this 'Year of Faith', we can ponder over its particular relevance and its challenges that confront us. It is a night that starred our hope of peace and salvation. Its reference will be more manifest, as Luke the evangelist records the scene of Jesus walking into his own family-synagogue of Nazareth

"The 'Year of Faith' will beckon us to read the deeper meaning of Christmas wherein we see human dignity exalted to its zenith and the solidarity of mankind brought to sharp focus. Christianity embraces humanity and its civilization. Its sole message is the pledge of life in its plenitude to all who are of good-will. The 'Year of Faith' empowers us to see that this dream comes true. Christmas thus transforms the 'Year of Faith' in praise of the dignity of man"

of Avila and John of the Cross have attested to this same experience. So did the three Kings who ventured from the East in search of the Messiah, the King of the Jews. They went down in spontaneous adoration at the manger and offered gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. We are told umpteen number of times, that the Mother of Jesus could not comprehend certain events connected with her Son's life, but prayerfully pondered them over in her heart, the contemplative soul she was. The reply that Jesus gave as a twelve-year-old when lost at the temple and the scene of the miracle of Cana were some of those revelations that were granted to her. The wonderful thing is that the Mother of Jesus lived through that entire span from the night of Bethlehem to the dark hours of Calvary with this mystery

on a Sabbath day to take up the scroll of Isaiah and declare that the prophecy about glad tidings heralded to the poor as well as sight bestowed to the blind, release to the captives and the Grand Year of Divine Blessings is about to be fulfilled in him. It was worth getting amazed in wonder and feasting one's eyes upon the son of Mary and Joseph, for indeed the Messiah had appeared in the synagogue (Luke 4:18-19).

Bartimaeus, the blind man at the gates of Jericho received his sight, gazed on Him and saw the face of God (Mark 10:46-52). Virtue went out of Him to heal the woman who had an issue of blood for eighteen long years when she reached out to touch the hem of his garment (Luke 8:43-48). St. Paul on his journey to Damascus intent on persecuting the believ-

ers heard Him as he fell off his horse and was struck blind. It marked the beginning of his conversion! (Acts 9:1-10). Today, in the helpless babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger in the backyard of the inn in Bethlehem, we all stand in wonder at the Word of God become Flesh. The tiny infant is God in miniature. The angelic chorus bursts forth from the stillness of the sky in praise of God with the song announcing peace on earth to all people of goodwill. The shepherds are summoned to the crib to which they hasten to feast their eyes on the Messiah who is born. The wise men journey from the far-east with gifts guided by a strange star that lights up their path to Bethlehem like the white cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that led the wandering people of Israel across the waters of the Red Sea and the wilderness of unknown territories to the promised land of Canaan. God walked with them (Exodus 13:21-22).

Christmas this year

The city of Bethlehem buzzing with massive crowds pouring in for the census decreed by Emperor Augustus Caesar completely missed out on this wonderful event that came to pass at her gates that exceptional night of light. But Mary who already got the news at the moment when Angel Gabriel came to her as well as Joseph her husband, the just man who knew the secret of his wife's motherhood, together with the humble shepherds who watched their flocks, the marginalised of society and the wise men who could read the star and its guidance - these did behold the mystery of the first Silent and Holy Christmas Night. Who will see the real Christmas and its Babe with the light of Faith this time too? Not those who wallow in its wild and worldly celebration but the meek and humble of heart: They who will reach the cribs of hay and wattle that bevy all the nooks and corners of our world!

This year's Christmas festival brings us all the opportunity and grace of celebrating our Christian Faith in the Mystery of Incarnation - God became man for us and for our salvation. It is a veritable jewel in the crown of the 'Year of Faith'. What greater joy can we celebrate and share with the rest of mankind! The 'Year of Faith' will beckon us to read the deeper meaning of Christmas wherein we see human dignity exalted to its zenith and the solidarity of mankind brought to sharp focus. Christianity embraces humanity and its civilization. Its sole message is the pledge of life in its plenitude to all who are of goodwill. The 'Year of faith' empowers us to see that this dream comes true. Christmas thus transforms the 'Year of faith' in praise of the dignity of man.



How I view Christmas

Ven. Professor Bellanwila Wimalaratana Thero
Chancellor -
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Christmas Day is the holiest day for all Christians, and Christians all over the world celebrate this Holy Day in pious solemnity and religious grandeur. The significance of Christmas is such that it is now generally considered as a time that induces and encourages all to rise above petty divisions and bonds for people to live in harmony and peace. But none of these features really highlight the true significance of Christmas. We have to give thought to find out what really is the true significance of Christmas. As a Buddhist I see the Christmas Day as the day on which we have to ponder what exactly is humanness.

To Christians, Jesus, born on the Christmas Day is the Son of God. But I see Him as a great noble human being. The services rendered by Him for the good and well-being of the human-kind is immeasurable. Having been born among human beings, living and

growing - up among them, he spent all His life to serve the human beings. If we consider his teaching from a rational perspective, we would see it not as a revelation but as an expression concerning the true state of affairs prevailing in the society, expressions voicing the experience he gained from the society. He denounced injustice and inequality and always upheld and fought for justice and equality. His criticism aimed at the oppressive acts done in the name of God and condoned by the prelates of the traditional Jew ecclesiastical hierarchy clearly demonstrates this humanistic attitude of His.

The following quote from Mathew 23 is a good example. Jesus said:

"Woe to you, the teachers of the Law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs which look beautiful on the outside - but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.

"You give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the Law - Justice, mercy and faithfulness."

The whole life of Jesus Christ was dedicated to bring about an ethically good society, where the people will find peace and happiness; to free the average people from oppression of the privileged class. Jesus said that poverty facilitates this meeting with God. He said:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew:5)
He further said : *"Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God"* (Matthew:19)

With such bold expressions Jesus tried to drive in the point that a life of poverty founded on morality, is better than a life of affluence acquired through corrupt practices and illegal means. It is true that he had to pay with his life for being truthful and bold to speak up against evils and corruption.

Yet, through his noble life and conduct we see the glistening example of his incomparable humanness. Therefore, the true significance of the Christmas Day should be considered as connoting the sublime nature of humanness.

Christmas becomes beautiful not merely because of the attractive saleable items that fill the shops; not because the roads are adorned with colourful electric bulbs.

The Churches do not become attractive one Christmas Day merely because of the Psalms sung inside them. The homes do not become pleasant merely because of the delicious food items prepared in them to celebrate the Christmas.

Christmas Day becomes beautiful when the mind is freed from anger and revengeful feelings; when people are able to go beyond petty divisions of caste, creed, race, etc., when corruption and injustice are shattered and when morals, justice and equality are made to reign.

With the end of the oppressive war which lasted almost three decades Christians are now able to celebrate



"When a Child is Born"

Christmas throughout the island unhindered, and with great pomp and solemnity. The Message of Christmas is peace. But it should go as deeper than mere superficial peace. Christmas Day will be more meaningful if we emphasise the importance of transgressing petty difference, and co-existing peacefully.

The most sublime and noble manner in which we could honour the great being born on this day is by turning ourselves into good human beings.

He came down ...

Rev. Sr. Cynthia Mendis, PH

"For us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven: By the power of the Holy Spirit He became Incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man" (Nicene Creed).

In this Year of Faith celebrated universally, the feast of Christmas also assumes great significance for us. We are confronted with another truth and mystery of our faith. The fact of the birth of Jesus is recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and the reasons for it attested to by all the evangelists and St. Paul. In fact, we know that it is also prophesied in the Old Testament.

Isaiah predicts: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder and his name will be called 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace'" (9:6). In Luke's gospel the angels tell the shepherds "the good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord..." (2.10.11). St. Paul confirms the reasons for his coming down to us as: "But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Galatians 4.4,5).

Force of Love

What does it mean for God to "come down?" It implies no geographical movement, no location as up or down. It means only the force of LOVE that draws the divine to the level of the human.

The Prayer of the Church "hymns" its wonder as follows:

"Lord, remember that in love Thou didst leave thy throne above, Man's frail nature to assume In the holy Virgin's womb. Now the church, each circling year,

Celebrates that love so dear; Love that brought thee here alone, For the guilty to atone."

Jesus seems to tell us: I came down to earth because I love you. I gave up everything - all the power, glory and splendour of heaven to come down and make the precious treasure of salvation and eternal life available to you. I have the whole universe in my possession but I need to give you my love and receive your love in return. I have started an eternal chain of love and I depend on you to continue it. Loving always costs but it is richly rewarding, and is rewarded. It means costly sacrifice as mine on the cross. Yet, love never fails. It always triumphs in the end." Christmas is all about giving, caring and sharing... it is the feast of Love.

The reasons for this coming down in LOVE was solely in order to save us. The giving of himself was utterly unselfish. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). "In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9,10). "Sick, our nature demanded to be healed; fallen, to be raised up; dead, to rise again. Are these things minor or insignificant? Did they not move God to descend to human nature and visit it, since humanity was in so miserable and unhappy a state?" (Gregory of Nyssa). Every Sunday we repeat the words: "He came down for us men and for our salvation" (Creed).

Model of Holiness

Jesus, the Son of God, came down as man also to be our model of holiness and we know that Vatican II emphasizes: All are called to holiness. Then, all of us need the Christmas fes-

tival, at least, to remind us of this great and noble truth. We can celebrate it with true purpose if we realize also our call to be holy as Jesus is holy, to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect. As a call it is a process, not to be achieved overnight, but aspired to with humble determination, through our daily efforts. And so Christmas-time can also be the opportunity that God offers us to be unselfish through sacrificial sharing, reflective through deeper prayer, and a soul-searching to discover how far or near we are to holiness in our way of life.

St. Peter reiterates that Jesus came down as man so that we can "become partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1.4) by escaping "from the corruption that is in the world." We receive divine sonship, become sons and daughters of God who can cry out, "Abba! Father! So through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son then an heir" (Galatians 4.6,7). "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God," says St. Athanasius and St. Thomas Aquinas adds: "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods."

These quotations may even seem disturbing to us. But it is our calling because of Jesus coming down and becoming man. The difficulty is that the birth of Jesus seems a paradox when seen from a worldly perspective. The King of Glory, the Lord of Lords, come down as a helpless baby in poverty? The Lord of the Universe in a lowly stable? Everything in the world order seems to be turned upside down. What is highly esteemed today by worldly standards -



like wealth, learning, power, seem to be worthless in the presence of this Babe. Poor, unlearned shepherds receive the good news and are asked to go in search of the "sign," i.e. "a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger" (Luke 1:12)

St. Paul speaks brilliantly of this mystery: The Lord gives up the glory and splendour of heaven, grasping not his own equality with the Father, but emptying himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, humbling himself in obedience unto death. (Phil.2.6,7). He came down not with tinsel and baubles, Christmas trees and reindeer.

Into our Hearts

Today, where does Jesus come down? Not to a stable but into our hearts. Jesus is the One we need to worship with all our mind and heart and strength, like the humble shepherds and the wise men. He is the One we need to turn to when life gets tough, as our Prince of Peace. The One we can confide in as our best Friend who loves each of us personally as if only I exist. "By his Incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man" (*Gaudium et Spes* 22). He is not a remote, plastic version of a hero but has a living, pulsating heart that beats for each one of us out of love. He is one we can trust our lives with. Living in the

(Contd. on Pg15)

10



"When a Child is Born"

“He brought forth her firstborn son, and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:7) There was nothing spectacular about the birth. Nothing glamorous. No prior preparation of a cradle or a cozy room with colourful walls or artistic designs. One could see only a cattleshed with fodder. The ass looking out to see any visitors arriving to greet the new born as

They Believed

Rev. Sr. M. Sunitha AC

that he would have to protect the child and be a loving companion to Mary. His faith helped him to be a changed man.

The humble, poor shepherds were keeping watch over their sheep. They were the chosen ones to hear the good news of the Birth of the Messiah. They were attentive and open to God's message. With the Glory of the Lord the Angel appeared to them breaking the Good News saying, “Do not be afraid; I am here to give you good news, great joy for all the people. Today a Saviour has been born to you in David's town. He is the Messiah and the Lord. Let this be a sign to you, you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger” (Luke 2:10). They believed. They went hurriedly and found Mary and Joseph with the Baby. Yes they were rewarded for their faith. Their decision to visit the place was immediate. This was rewarded. They were the first to behold the Divine Babe in a manger. The Good Shepherd of Israel invited the lowly shepherds to experience the humble beginnings of the Creator as a helpless babe. Faith is always rewarded. Faith needs to be exercised and put into practice; then it will grow from strength to strength. Faith is a gift given to us in Baptism. It is a gratuitous gift from above.

During this year we are summoned with a special call to sharpen the edges of this faith. During the Season of Christmas we have the above persons to look at and to learn from them.

though in contemplation of the future journey towards Jerusalem which He will make on its back. The bull sitting close to the new born visualizing the sacrifice that He would make once and for all for the whole human race on Calvary.

The mercy of God came down, the heavens showered its blessings and the WORD became true human flesh on Christmas Day. Although He did not cling to His Divinity (Phil.2:6) the multitude (heavenly choirs sang the good news to prove His true divine nature. (Luke 2:13) The Angels sang and announced the news joyfully and proclaimed that the Saviour was born. Yes a Saviour was born for us, for the salvation of the whole world.

Mary was in contemplation. She was recalling the words of the Angel which has become a reality to her on this memorable day. Yes a Son is given to us whose name will be called ‘Emmanuel’ God with us. Mary was young physically and spiritually when God chose her to be the mother of the promised Messiah. She had no one to

consult, no spiritual directors, no special friend to turn to. Who would help her discern the will of God? She was bewildered. She asked one important question. “How can this be, since I do not know man, and the reply came from the Angel” The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you” { Luke. 1: 34} Mary bowed and said “Let it be.” She believed. Not halfheartedly but in full measure. She believed without confusion. She believed because with God everything is possible. “Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase,” said Martin Luther King [Jr] She was aware of the consequences that she would have to face, having bowed her head, specially with Joseph to whom she was betrothed. Nevertheless her faith in God the Almighty was unshakable.” Blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it” would be the words of her own Son which will be addressed to her in the future. Mary was a wise virgin. She had oil in her lamp to welcome

the King. Mary understood that she was called to be the Mother of the Word Incarnate. As Saint Augustine was to express it, “She must conceive Him in His totality in the head and in the members.”

She believed also the words of the Angel that her cousin Elizabeth was with child. Therefore she hastened to greet her. At this encounter with her cousin, Mary's faith was exalted, it was appreciated and endorsed by Elizabeth with these appropriate words, “Blessed is she who believed for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord” (Luke 1 :45). Since she believed, the joyful song the *Magnificat* came alive between her lips with gratitude and humility.

Joseph the just man who trusted Mary and who was dreaming of a happy family life found her with child. Unexplainable situation. Unfathomable circumstances. Surely Joseph too had the same question “How could this ever happen?” The respect he had for her did not permit him to shame her in public. Her simplicity, her docility, her innocent looks were not able to mingle with such a doubt. All the more, Joseph was puzzled. Who would ensure him of the innocence of this beautiful creature? No one dared to approach him. Therefore he decided to put her away secretly. While he was wrestling with many thoughts the Angel of the Lord appeared to him. “Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, having conceived by the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1: 20) Joseph believed. Further he did not question. He understood

A Heavenly Dream

*On a cold winter's evening one day
I was going to the chapel to pray
I heard angelic voices sing
“Glory to the new born King”*

*Up above the sky so far
I saw a bright new shining star
In a manger with cattle and sheep
Little Lord Jesus on the hay asleep*

*Mary and Joseph their faces so bright
Angels with trumpets a beautiful sight
Shepherds from afar came one by one
to pay homage to God's only begotten Son*

*My heart was filled with joy and gladness
The Saviour has come down to redeem us
That heavenly dream in my memory will linger
Until I rest in God's loving embrace*

Maurice Nanayakkara

Santa Claus just a puppet

As Catholics we must strive hard to stop this notion of giving a prominent place to Santa Claus, at Christmas.

Santa Claus has nothing to do with Christmas. The birthday of Jesus Christ. He is just a puppet, a sales rep. As Catholic parents we are misleading our children. In some Catholic

homes, Santa Claus is given pride of place, thus giving children the wrong impression of Christmas.

To deify Santa Clause is the height of absurdity. For some, Santa Claus the puppet is the centrepiece of Christmas. Where is Baby Jesus? He is there in a corner of the house in a crib, unseen forgotten. Let us not insult that



great saint, St. Nicholas and let us stop this desecration.

J.T. Mirando

Faith and the Christmas Story

“Faith is man's response to God who reveals Himself and gives Himself to man,” says the Catechism of the Catholic Church. (P.39 no. 176 39 no. 176)

The Divine Revelation is the mystery of God's will which is realised simultaneously by deeds and words. He especially revealed His divine life and the way to heavenly salvation through His words which we call the Word of God, to man.

The acceptance of the Word of God as the absolute truth is faith. Faith is a supernatural gift of God enabling us to believe and have confidence in the Word of God.

The confidence in the Word of God is the source of Christmas. After the fall of our first parents God promised to send a Saviour to redeem mankind from the bondage of the evil one, saying, “I will make you and the woman hate each other; her offspring and yours will always be enemies. Her offspring will crush your head” (Genesis 3: 15).

This foreshadow of the birth of the Saviour gradually became a promise of God given to mankind. This promise of God later developed to a covenant be-

tween Himself and man through several chosen patriarchs in many stages. Also the prophets have preserved this knowledge of the covenant alive until the right time finally came.

However, when the due time arrived the people's expectation was based upon an earthly king who would deliver the Jewish nation from the bondage of Roman imperialism.

Nevertheless God's intention was to send a spiritual redeemer to deliver mankind from the bondage of evil. He intended a virgin to give birth to a baby boy as the promised Saviour of fallen mankind.

God sent the angel Gabriel to a virgin named Mary to announce that she has been chosen to be the mother of the promised Saviour. Though she was a virgin with no husband she believed that with God nothing is impossible and gave her ‘fiat’.

“Behold I am the hand-maid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to your word.” When Mary visited her cousin Elizabeth she greeted Mary as, “Blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her from the Lord.”

Pius Fernando

Joseph who was betrothed to Mary came to know that she was pregnant before they were married made plans to break the engagement privately. But then keeping faith in the word of an angel who disclosed the real situation in a dream. He then obeyed God and married her. It is for this faith the Christmas came to this world.

On Christmas night the shepherds came to the stable where infant Jesus lay in the manger. They worshipped Him as the Saviour, because they had faith in the good news of the angel.

The Magi from the East came to Jerusalem worshipped the child Jesus offering their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh displaying their response of faith.

At the temple Simeon and Anna responded in faith, recognising infant Jesus as the salvation of all the people.

It is thus justifiable to mention that Christmas is the fruitful result of the faith in the Word of God.

Give a surprise - this Christmas!

Let's do it with a Christmas card.....

A part of shopping before Christmas would be to drop in to a stall of Christmas cards, to purchase a few. Invariably there is bound to be discrimination when selecting the cards, the elegant and expensive cards for the important and cheaper ones for the rest.

What matters for most who make their selection, is the size and beauty of the card but not so much the wish written in there. How many of us truly and genuinely take to heart and echo the wish, which the card carries forth. If we are not conscious of the wish we make through the card, we dupe those recipients who are our so called friends, by being superficial.

The criteria on which the list of priority is drawn up, of the recipients of our Christmas cards, are clear and logical. The faithful friends top the list, followed by the authorities to whom we pretend or crave to pledge our loyalty. Then follow the ones whom you anticipate would be of help to you, in the future and finally those ones to whom you respond, through reciprocity.

How happy one would be to receive a Christmas card from a friend. It goes without saying, that happiness would brim and overflow, if you receive one from an enemy or from a person you least expected. Apart from the wish, that card carries a message of seeking or granting forgiveness. An initiation to reconciliation and an invitation to harness mutual



**It would mean, as if though
you have found some one lost
or won a person over.
This would facilitate you
to have the best Christmas ever.**

bonds of friendship. To share the peace and love of Christmas is endorsed. It truly would soothe one's inner self. Apart from that the element of surprise fascinates beyond imagination. That then would be the greatest feeling one could enjoy,

during this Christmas.

The sure way to experience this would be to send a Christmas card to a person, who holds a grudge against you or who has a strained relationship with you. Reciprocity would mean a lot to you. It

would mean, as if though you have found some one lost or won a person over. This would facilitate you to have the best Christmas ever.

Tom was in the habit of sending a Christmas card to his 'God Father' every year. That had not happened in the recent past, since his dad had prevented him from doing so. In fact Tom's 'God Father' was his dad's younger brother. Due to a misunderstanding over a family issue, the relative bonds were shattered and broken. Even the Christmas visits were not exchanged. This mattered most to Tom, because he desperately missed the Christmas present from his 'God Father'.

Earlier Tom was in the habit of sending a special Christmas card to his 'God Father'. What made it so special was that, he used his creative artistic talents to fashion it and more so, Tom made mention of the present he desired for Christmas in it. Nothing seemed wrong, since it was done at the request of his 'God Father'. For that reason Tom made it a point to post it, well a head of schedule. In the recent past there were no Christmas cards, no visits and no presents from either party. The barrier was caused by the failure to reach a consensus on a discrepancy, on some sensitive and delicate issue. Neither party was willing to compromise, which precipitated hatred and animosity, between the two, siblings and their families.

During the season of Advent, Tom made his confession. Possibly this worry was shared at the confessional and



**"When a Child
is Born"**

Tom acted on advice. Tom created the most beautiful Christmas card ever, and posted it to his 'God Father'. In it was written this message. "The present that I want most, is nothing but to see you at our home, this Christmas." This act was done by Tom in mute secrecy. A 'God Father', could he ever refuse a loving plea such as that, from a 'God son' of twelve? What a surprise it was. Moved by the sentiments expressed in the card, Tom's 'God Father', visited them that Christmas. That very Christmas was the best for Tom, his dad and the rest. Tom received the most valuable present of 'peace' which he shared with his family members. Tom's dad was the beneficiary, who was rewarded the most, with of the 'prize gift of peace'. Tom's share was even better since he received loads of other gifts from his God Father, which he never dreamt of.

If your intentions are genuine and sincere, great would be the things, that a simple Christmas card, could bring.

RodeZo

Christmas remains a continuous "Mystery" for all time

In a little town in Bethlehem a unique event in the history of mankind that shook the world, took place over twenty centuries ago. It was the birth of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace called Christmas. This glorious event has been celebrated down the ages to the present time and would go on till the end of time. Christians throughout the world are once again preparing to commemorate this special occasion. This event was to be the beginning of the life story of the promised Messiah, who came in to the world, not only to redeem mankind from sin and bring salvation, but also to give comfort to the grief stricken, the poor, the suffering and downtrodden. This he did by the life he lived on earth and finally sacrificed his life by dying on the cross and taking on himself the penalty for human sin. The Messiah was to provide a serving mission on earth and was rightly called the 'Servant Messiah'. He always wanted to serve and never expected to be served.

The real meaning and significance of the birth of Christ was importantly based on hope, expectation, love, justice, peace, good will and forgiveness, which was to be bestowed to mankind by his life, death and resurrection. For he was to be the way, the truth and life, and that he will come again in all his glory to judge the living and the dead. Therefore it should be clearly understood

that every Christmas, it ought to be Christ with us now, forever and the kingdom of God still to be realized. Christmases will come and go as they usually do every year, but like the life of Christ would remain a continuous mystery, which would bring new hopes of a new life in Christ to each and every one. Although the first Advent was only a prelude to a great and certain event the world was to witness, the significance, importance and impact on the human race then and now has not been properly understood to date and instead tends to remain a mystery.

To many Christ continues to be a helpless babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes, still lying in a manger. On the contrary there are those who realize this rare and wonderful gift, where God the father gave himself in Christ. He was to be the living savior to be experienced in our lives, so as to see God the father through Jesus. Then only when we permit Jesus to be born in our lives, not only during Christmas, can what happened in Bethlehem happen once again today in the world, keeping in mind that every day another Christ is born, and in the babe God had become man. Christmas down ages has traditionally been an occasion and a festival of great joy and happiness. There is ample evidence in the Scriptures to show that Christianity is essentially a message of joy. It inspires confidence in the believer and transforms a

life of sorrow, grief, despair and tribulations into one of hope and joy at the same time dispels fear and anxiety bringing comfort and solace. The message of joy has echoed throughout the world from the very first Christmas. However it is sad to note that man has fashioned endless variations, by which the material joys have surpassed the spiritual joys that every Christian should experience during this time. Unfortunately today in a world that is drifting and growing more and more materialistic and secular, Christmas is fast losing its significance and meaning. Man loses this real happiness when he deliberately keeps on distancing himself, and ignores and abandons God only to remember and celebrate the occasion in a material way with only external manifestations. Further the message of Christmas has been very often misunderstood and misinterpreted by a coterie of Christians who are influenced by their own ideologies and dispositions failing to realize that Christmas is a festival not merely denoting the birth of Christ, but the unity of God and man, the promise of salvation and eternal life. This can only happen with our meeting Christ in person. To such unbelievers Christ had been a failure. There is no Christmas without Christ the central figure. The spiritual joy, which the Angels proclaimed to the Shepherds and the world on the first Christmas night. "Be not afraid.

I bring you tidings of great joy" is sadly lacking at the present time, which is the cause of confusion and turmoil to all mankind.

As we look at the world, our country and in our own surroundings, it is full of evil, injustice, corruption, hatred, poverty, exploitation, untold suffering and misery. How many of us for a moment reflect and ponder that the message of Christmas was brought for the poor and lowly? Christ said "The poor you will have with you always, and whenever you will, you can do good to them" (Mark 14/7). Then this is a time, when all those who call themselves followers of Christ must go out to a suffering world and share God's love and peace by a life of sacrificial service. The deeper meaning and message of Christmas is essentially peace and good will to all mankind combined with the other important aspect of caring and sharing. Since Christmas is back on the threshold, this challenge, that the love seen in the stable and later on the cross, to share the resources of God's world and message is to ensure peace, justice and equality among all mankind, more so the less fortunate. For hunger, want of shelter, clothing and financial problems, continue to plague the poor in our midst.

Then there are also destitute elders who have been disowned, discarded and aban-

doned by their own children. These helpless folks are either on the streets and left desolate languishing in make shift homes undergoing immense suffering, pain of mind and hardship. Then Christmas is a God given time for affording them a better living and bringing relief, comfort, or some sort of happiness in the sunset years of their lonely lives. Apart from this discord, hatred and strife the order of the day all over the world should be banished from our society. Crime and violence is rampant in every nook and corner, precipitating loss of life and property. Morals and values of life have reached the lowest ebb and human dignity completely degraded and wrecked. All these inhuman action and tendencies go to negate the very idea, for which Christ came into this world. It is incumbent on the part of every Christian to spread the message of love and compassion through noble deeds especially to the poor, the homeless, the lonely the marginalized and victims of war, so that they could live with honor dignity and peace. This could only be achieved by a change of heart, soul searching and attitude towards our fellow men. Once this is achieved, we could really be worthy being called children of God and true disciples of Christ.

Francis Vethanayagam JP

12



**"When a Child
is Born"**

"To be like Jesus"

Dear Jesus, help us to be honest and true
In all that we say and do,
Give us the courage to do what is right
And bring to the world a glimpse of your light.

If we commit ourselves to Jesus
And follow in His way,
He will give us life that satisfies
With our purpose for every day.

Perfect submission, all is at rest
We in our dear Jesus are happy and blessed,
Watching and waiting, looking above
Filled with His goodness lost in His love.



Anton Selemberam

CREDO- I BELIEVE

Says the Lawrentians hailing their Annual Carol Service



The school community of St. Lawrence's Convent which consists of students, teachers and parents, got together in harmony as a family to emphasize the belief and faith of the Incarnation. They did welcome the Blessed Season of Christmas on December 7, 2012.

The Auxiliary Bishop Rt. Rev. Dr. Maxwell Granville Silva blessed the

school family and inspired them with an exceptional Christmas message.

Rev. Fr. Ranjith Madurawala, General Manager of Catholic Private Schools, Rev. Fr. Saman Maximus and Rev. Fr. Travis Gabriel, Rector of St. Peter's College were among the religious who participated at the service.

Sherline

What Christmas is to me

Christmas is a feeling of Joy that is to be shared with each and everyone, no matter big or small, rich or poor. On this great day we celebrate the birth of our New Born Saviour Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.



Anthea Lakshani OKI International School

Manger

M Mary laid her child in the manger
A Animals, cattle and shepherds rallied round
N No bed and pillow for the Babe to lay on
G God's will it was to happen this way
E Example for everyone to love the poor
R Reminder for us to shun worldly pomp and avaricious living

Iris Perera

An old Christmas Card

Between the pages of an old book,
I found a Christmas card
Twas' old and faded - but the words
Were full of love and cheer.

A "Happy Christmas to you,
dear" it said
May dear God bless you to-day,
And all through the years it said,

His Blessings follow you from day to day"

The sender has gone to his last rest.
But the words, sincere and clear
"God Bless You today and every day
All through the years ahead.

The words are old, the ink is faded
But the word ring loud and clear

Christmas Joy.....& Sadness

Christmas is a time of prayer when we joyfully celebrate the birth of our Saviour. It is also a time of family get-togethers when old friendships are renewed and old friends remembered. But for some Christmas merriment is also tinged with sadness. There are many to whom Christmas brings poignant memories of times

spent with their loved ones who are now no more.

Many poems and writings on Christmas focus on holiness, joy and merriment. The following verse however helps us remember and pray for those to whom Christmas has a sad side.

Lord there sit apart in lonely places
On this the gladdest night of all the year
Some stricken ones with sad and lonely faces
For whom the thought of Christmas brings no cheer
Lord some sit by lonely hearthstones sobbing
Who feel this night all earthly love denied
Who hear but dirges in the loud bells throbbing
For loved ones lost who blessed last Christmastide
For these O Father our petition hear
And send the loving Christ Child very near.

(Author Unknown)

Sent by: Terrence Savundranayagam.

Christmas

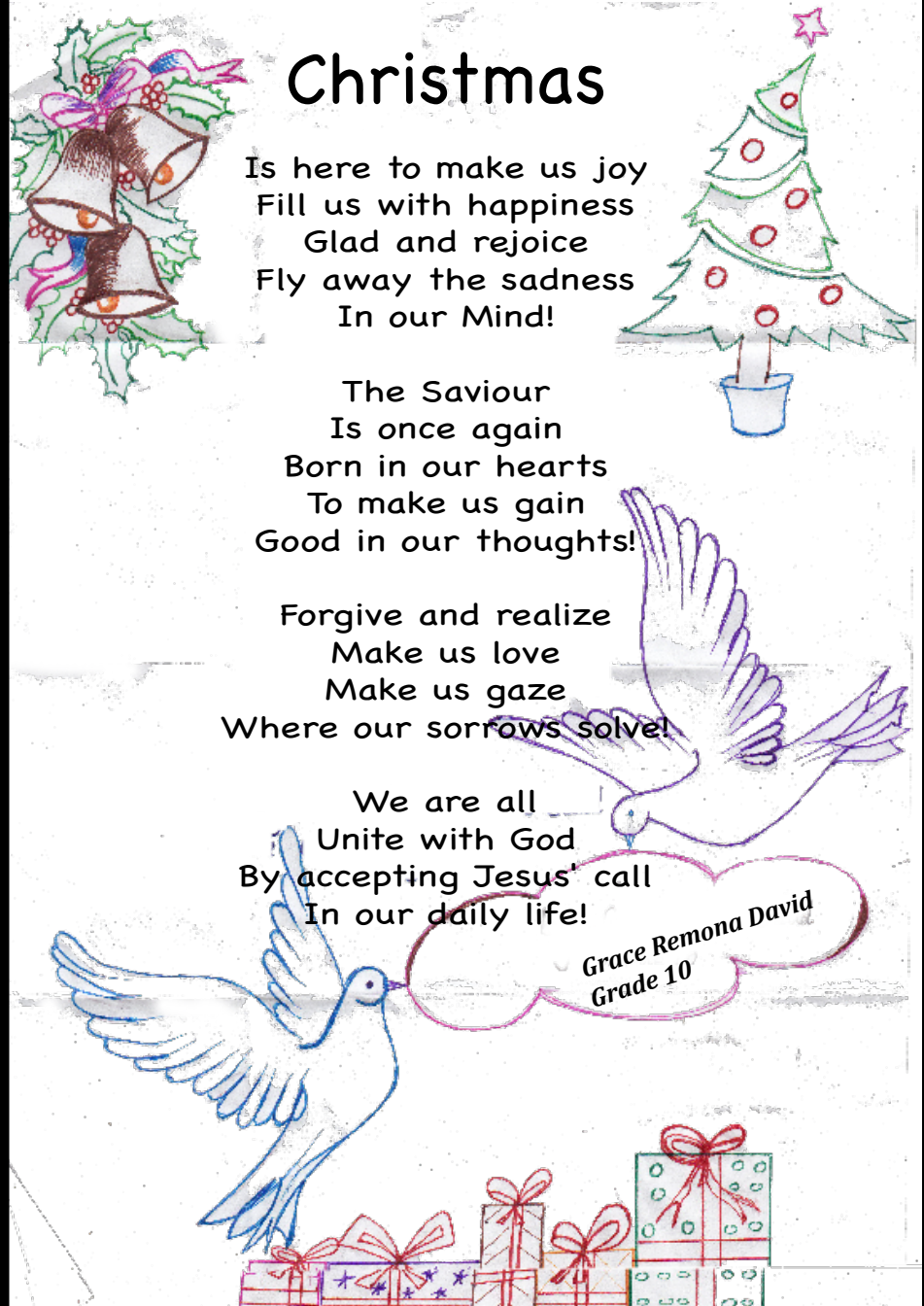
Is here to make us joy
Fill us with happiness
Glad and rejoice
Fly away the sadness
In our Mind!

The Saviour
Is once again
Born in our hearts
To make us gain
Good in our thoughts!

Forgive and realize
Make us love
Make us gaze
Where our sorrows solve!

We are all
Unite with God
By accepting Jesus' call
In our daily life!

*Grace Remona David
Grade 10*



What it says in
the Readings

**I am the handmaid of the Lord;
let what you have said be done to
me.**

Lk. 1:38

**LITURGICAL CALENDAR YEAR C
23rd Dec. - 30th Dec. 2012**

Sun: FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Mic 5: 1-4a; Heb. 10:5-10; Lk. 1: 39-45

Mon: 2 Sam. 7:1-5, 8b-12,14a,16;

Lk. 1: 67-69

Tue: Christmas Day

Is. 52:7-10; Heb.1:1-6; Jn. 1:1-18

Wed: Feast of St. Stephen

Protomartyr

Act 6: 8-10; Mt.10:17-22

Thu: Feast of St. John Apostle &

Evangelist

1 Jn. 1:1-4; Jn. 20:2-8

Fri: Feast of Holy Innocents, Martyrs

1 Jn.1:5 - 2: 2; Mt. 3:13-18

Sat: 1 Jn. 2:3-11; Lk. 2:22-35

**Sun: THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS,
MARY AND JOSEPH**

1 Sam. 1: 20-22,24-28;

1 Jn. 3:1-2,21-24; Lk. 2:41-52

Mon: 1 Jn. 2:18-21; Jn. 1:1-18

**Tue: Feast of Mary, the Holy Mother of
God**

Num 6: 22-27; Gal. 4: 4-7; Lk. 2: 16-21

**Wed: Memorial of SS Basil the Great &
Gregory Nazianzen**

1 Jn. 2: 22-28; Jn. 1: 19-28

**Thu: Memorial of The Most Holy Name of
Jesus**

1 Jn. 2:29 - 3: 6; Jn.1: 29-34

Fri: 1 Jn. 3:7-10; Jn. 1:35-43

Sat: 1 Jn. 3:11-21; Jn. 1:43-51

Sun: The Epiphany of the Lord

Is. 60:1-6; Eph. 3:2-3a,5-6;

Mt. 2:1-12

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

**Response: O come to us abide in us, Our Lord
Emmanuel.**

For all the followers of Jesus: That they may experience a renewal of their faith in Him this Christmas. We pray to the Lord.

**Response: O come to us abide in us, Our Lord
Emmanuel.**

For all government leaders: That they may never despise any of their fellow human beings, since through Christ's coming we are all children of God. We pray to the Lord.

**Response: O come to us abide in us, Our Lord
Emmanuel.**

That all families which are scattered may be reunited, and that those in distress may experience relief. We pray to the Lord.

**Response: O come to us abide in us, Our Lord
Emmanuel.**

That each of us this Christmas may extend the hand of understanding, forgiveness and friendship to all, but especially to those from whom we may be estranged. We pray to the Lord.

**Response: O come to us abide in us, Our Lord
Emmanuel.**

Christmas

Christmas is the feast during which we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus, the Saviour, the Word that became flesh in order to save all mankind. About His birth Prophet Isaiah says, "For us a child is born, to us a Son is given; and dominion is laid on his shoulder; and this is the name they gave Him; Wonderful Counselor, mighty God, everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Wide is His dominion in a peace that has no end.

The Gift of the Son of God was given to us not because we were worthy of it but because of the mercy and the grace of God.

Today the values of Christmas as well as the facts about it are exaggerated by the society including the Church.

There is a big competition between Santa Claus and Baby Jesus.

There is a big competition between the Crib and the Christmas tree.

Therefore though it is the birth of our Divine

Saviour that we celebrate during Christmas, there is a great competition between the things of this world over the things divine. This competition can be seen even in the Christmas messages.

About His birth there are certain things that we have to keep in mind. In His birth all the prophetic words about the Saviour, the Messiah were fulfilled. No other birth occurred on this earth that could fulfill these words.

Jesus was born to the family of Joseph and Mary and they happened to be a carpenter family. If we try to say that Jesus was born to a poor family in order to prove that Jesus is found only in poor families, all the good and dedicated life that Mary and Joseph lived from their birth goes unheeded. That is the greatest injustice that we could do to Mary and Joseph.

The Inn-keepers never refused the Savior or the parents of the Saviour a place of rest. They only could not find a place for a man and for a woman and

that man and woman happened to be the parents of Jesus and Jesus happened to be with them, yet unborn. This could happen to all of us if our life inns are full and also if we do not read the signs of the times and for one reason or other are not able to recognise the Lord who comes to us in our neighbourhood. It was mentioned in the scriptures about a census during the birth of the Messiah. Augustus Caesar had called up a census that is why Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem. And here is a woman about to give birth to a child. The Inn-keepers could have guessed if they knew and read the signs of the times.

Most probably God wanted be born in a place where people would least expect and people could easily approach. Otherwise he would have sent an angel to prepare a place in a palace; for normally it is there that we expect the birth of a king.

First of all His birth is made known to the Shepherds. It does



**"When a Child
is Born"**

not mean that He is made known only to the suffering; we all know that even the Kings followed the star of the Lord to see Him. Therefore it is quite clear that Jesus is made known to the ones that are expecting Him, and also who are prepared to welcome Him.

Prophet Isaiah referring to the birth of our Saviour who came to save us says "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwell in a land of darkness, on them has light shone." This in short tells us the purpose of his coming. He came to save sinners, rich and poor alike.

Rev. Fr. Ciswan De Croos

He came.....

Contd. from Pg. 9

midst of material riches as never before, He alone can satisfy our spiritual hunger and impoverishment.

It is not difficult to understand how God can come down into human hearts when we see people who are transformed by a deep personal experience of Christ; those who change and manifest Christ-like qualities of sharing, caring and sacrificing bearing witness to a deep conversion; those who renounce worldly goods and attachments committing their lives to God's service.

One of the Messiah's names is "Wonderful" and so was Jesus, from birth to death. He came down, died and rose again that we may have eternal life. Now He lives to intercede for us. What has Jesus given us personally over the years - big things and small? Consider the answered prayers, the blessings bestowed, the lessons taught even through crises, the LOVE shared. Christmas is a good time to reflect on all that we have received from the Lord. ... the many gifts. And now that it is also gift-giving time may he move us to give of our plenty to those who have little. He comes into our hearts also when we become child-like in relation to God and his kingdom. This is to share in the birth of this Babe of Christmas. Then the mystery of Christmas will be fulfilled also in us. We are called to a "marvelous exchange" as the Prayer of the Church tells us. "O wonderful exchange! The Creator of human nature took on a human body and was born of the Virgin. He became man without having a human father and has bestowed on us his divine nature."

When God becomes a Child, we who are "born anew" "born from above" "born of God," "become children of God" (John ch.1). When "Christ is formed in us," coming down into our hearts, then the mystery of Christmas will be within us. He comes down to raise us up to noble heights.

THE STORY OF CHRISTMAS

T'was in the sixth month 2012 years ago in the little town of Galilee in Nazareth, Lived a pretty young virgin to a man named Joseph was betrothed. The daughter of Anna and Joachim, her name was Mary. In deep prayer she was, when the Angel Gabriel appeared to her in all his glory.

"Fear Not" said the Angel, "You have found favour with God," "You shall bear a son and JESUS he shall be called."

So astonished was Mary, "How can this be" she exclaimed! "The Power of the most high will overshadow you," the Angel proclaimed. Said Mary to the Angel "Behold I am the Hand Maid of the Lord" "Let it be done according to thy word."

To visit her cousin Elizabeth, Mary went in haste, The babe in her cousin's womb leapt when it heard the voice of the Virgin most chaste! Mary thanked and praised the Lord with sincere devotion from her heart, To this date, with reverence we sing these praises known as the MAGNIFICAT!

Joseph a righteous man, planned to hide his betrothed from shame, But in a dream, the Angel of the Lord to him did explain, That the babe in her womb will be great and His kingdom will have no end, So to guide and protect Mary, humbly did Joseph extend.

Augustus the Emperor, announced that all the world be censored, Each in his own town and village with their kith and kin be registered. Joseph from the line of David with his wife to Bethlehem in Judea they set forth

On this long and tiring journey Mary rode on a little donkey, carrying her precious load.

Near an Inn they stopped looking for a place to rest, But the Inn Keeper had no room, showed a cattleshed far yonder, said that was the best!

The time was right for Mary to bring forth her first born, In swaddling clothes she wrapped him to keep him cuddled and warm.

While shepherds watched o'er their flock at night, A beautiful star they saw, the sky looked very bright. Sweet music filled the air with angelic voices from afar, To spread the Good News of the Saviour's birth they sang out everywhere.

Guided by that star, Shepherds and Kings hurried to the shed, There in a Manger lay the little babe with cattle and sheep by his bed. And so ends this story of that very first Christmas, When that little Baby JESUS, the Prince of Peace, became the Saviour to us all!

Antonette De Cruze

14



"When a Child is Born"

In God's goodness and wisdom, He chose to reveal Himself and to make known to mankind the hidden purpose of His will so that mankind might have access to Him and come to share in the eternal bliss that awaits them. After speaking in many and varied ways through the prophets, He was preparing at that time to send His Son, the eternal Word, to dwell among mankind as a source of enlightenment and tell them of the innermost being of God.

In the course of time, Prophet Isaiah revealed to the people of Judah that God Himself would give them a sign before the coming of the Word: "The virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and shall name Him Emmanuel, which means God with us." (Is. 7:14). This

prophesy had some ambiguity but was later understood to be concerned with the virginal birth of Emmanuel.

Isaiah made a further prophesy which referred to the divine attributes Emmanuel would have as God's messenger to mankind: "For a child is born to us, a son is given us; the royal ornament is laid upon His shoulder, and His name is proclaimed: Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince God Peace" (Is. 9:5-6). These words convey that Emmanuel would be remarkable for his wisdom; a worrier and a defender of His people; and His reign would abound in peace.

I was centuries later that Isaiah's prophesy was fulfilled. A young virgin named Mary, living in a town called Nazareth, who was betrothed to a man named Joseph, received an angelic message from God that she would conceive and bear a son who should be named Jesus. (Lk.1: 20)

Mary was troubled and overcome with fear because she was a virgin. A conception outside wedlock was not in harmony with Jewish law. In her perplexity she said "How can this be if I am a virgin?" To assure her that it was a divine initiative, the angel said "The Holy

Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the Holy child to be born shall be called Son of God" (Lk. 1: 35). In her simplicity and faith in God she replied "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me as you have said" (Lk. 1:38). The angel departed. The Word was made flesh in her womb.

Isaiah's prophesy focussed on Mary as the virgin chosen by God to give birth to His son. Hence she would have been born and would have lived her life under the protection and guidance of the Almighty God. It was she who was to give the Son of God His blood, His hereditary traits, His character and His first education. The one to be born of her in due time, was the same divine entity who preexisted in God as His Son. (Jn. 1: 1). In the supernatural realm, the Holy Spirit prepared for this Nativity which alone could fulfil the divinely given terms of Emmanuel's mission. The virginity of Mary had a direct relevance to Isaiah's prophesy and to the Nativity to follow in the sense intended by God.

The birth of Jesus took place in Bethlehem of Judea where Joseph and Mary had to present themselves at a census decreed by Emperor Augustus

Caesar of Rome. They took shelter in a cave where cattle were kept, being the only location they could find. Shepherds who were camping in the countryside, taking turns to watch over their flocks by night were the first to receive the Good News of the birth of Jesus, the Saviour, from angel of God who appeared to them. This was God's way of communicating with the shepherds who believed in Him. As told, the shepherds made their way to the stable where they found the new born Saviour and paid homage to Him.

Three wise men from the east had seen a large star which they believed was an astral phenomenon having a reference to the birth of the king of the Jews. They could have been Zoroastrian priests who were guided by astral forecasts and influences. As they had no knowledge of God, He communicated the news to them by means of a star. They too travelled to Bethlehem and paid homage to Jesus, the new born king, offering Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Looking at the early centuries of the Church, we realise that the birth of Jesus was not one of the earliest Christian festivals celebrated in the Church. The early fathers of

the Church were not in favour of celebrating the birth of Jesus because they felt that it would be equating Jesus with pagan emperors whose birthdays were celebrated by their subjects with great fanfare and solemnity on or around December 25. It seems that the early Church introduced the celebration of Jesus' birth on December 25, in order to entice pagans to become Christians and to gradually replace pagan festivities. However, identifying December 25, as a day of pagan festivity, it was with the passage of time that Christians were motivated to celebrate Jesus' birth on that date.

John Chrysostom (AD 349-407) offered his reasoning for celebrating the birth of Jesus on December 25, with reliance on the sources of scripture and history. According to him, John the Baptist was conceived by Elizabeth in the month of September. It was six months later that Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary announcing the birth of Jesus. As a sequel, Mary conceived Jesus in the month of March and Jesus was born nine months later in the month of December. The Church celebrates the feast of the Annunciation March 25, and the birth of Jesus on December 25.

E.M. Aldons

The other Christmas

The celebration of Christmas lasts for twelve days, from December 25 to January 6, a period that embraces three big festivities. That is, the birth of Jesus, New Year and the visit of three Kings from the Orient (Magi). Three nights that have come to be symbolic of this great feast of Nativity: the night of Christmas, night of New Year and the night of the Kings. The nucleus of Christian Christmas is centred on the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, with its religious celebrations and family encounters. The Christian communities of the first three centuries commemorated the resurrection of Jesus. That is the Paschal Mystery, the foundation of our Christian Faith. The day on which Jesus was born, was incorporated with it. The Christian belief is Faith in the resurrection of Jesus after His death.

The celebration of Christmas emerged in the church following the Christianization of the pagan feast of the birth of the Sun, celebrated on December 25, when its previous night was considered to be the longest of all nights. The

Church Christianized the pagan feast of the birth of the invisible Sun with the birth of the "Sun of Justice", applied to Jesus Christ following Malachi 3:20. In this way, the Christians tried to move away from the pagan feast and developed their own identity.

The Holy Season of Christmas is being near to God, adoration of child Jesus, option for the poor, memory of solidarity, of hope, of freedom and of peace.

Christmas is the feast of the families and of the neighbourhood in many countries. It is a moment of encounter and meetings in which there is time to deepen family ties and bonds of friendship and of affection. Also, it is a time in which parties and banquets are organized. Many people take joy and pride in organizing parties on this great event.

The families reunite and meet during Christmas. This leads to minute organising of matters relating to the preparation of food, decorations and the place for dinner, by the persons responsible for seeing everything through in all detail. Most often this or-

ganising calls for difficult adjustments to be made, with alternation of family schedules, to be able to be with all. It is also a day when tableclothes, cutlery, crockery, etc., reserved for special occasions reappear, though not used for habitual dinners at home.

These customs, without doubt, can produce a lot of preoccupation and concern. Desire for perfection in arrangement for the feast can lead some to excessive work, altering normal work schedules. The best way of celebrating Christmas is discovered from the effects that it causes. The celebration is seen to be in the right direction, when the family stays in a tension free atmosphere, with tranquility and good humor, and there are no symptoms of pressure and social stress.

This Christmas can be a good moment to change some customs and to simplify the mode of celebrating the feast. The families can reduce the sumptuous dishes and elegant clothes, to that of family togetherness, happiness, dialogue and participation. The external elements do not produce happi-

ness by themselves. It is necessary, and time to think and concentrate of excessive decorations of homes and amusements. The tradition of installing a small family crib of the Nativity can be more than enough. The decorations of the crib can also be carried out with simple elements as dry leaves, cardboard boxes and with a lot of imagination in arranging them. To complete this, the families can solicit the participation of the children in the family. With their participation in the installation of the crib, in the construction of hills and valleys, parks and roads, children could laugh at the imperfections that they have created. This habit of involvement of every boy and girl in the family feast would mean so much for the family.

Another factor that is to be remembered is that Christmas is for all. Hence sharing of responsibilities can be done between work and leisure time. Each family has certain traditions and culinary customs. As a matter of fact, there are dishes that take a lot of time for preparation and also bear high economic cost. Thus distribution

of this work and the contribution for the feast and party will considerably reduce the excessive expenditure, but at the same time increase the joy of celebrating the feast as family.

For many, in the best of the cases, Christmas is an occasion of family reunions. It is an occasion for many of us to look forward to encounters with the neighborhood and for the common celebration of the feast. To say the truth, for the majority, these are days of sumptuous food, extravagant expenditure: days of abundance and plenty.

But there exists another Christmas with possibilities of celebrating in another way. It is the Christmas of the poor and with the poor. Here I am not referring to the acts of charity on the eve of Christmas that many of us do. I refer, that we initiate a celebration of the feast that will make the poor happy, or more concretely, make some of the poor in our neighborhood happy.

Only in the search and concern for the poor, and in the enrichment of the poor, Christmas is possible. The true celebration of the feast is possible only in sharing those sumptuous dishes with the poor. It is not that our Christ-

mas needs to be miserable and sad. We need not go to a far off place to look for the poor. They are among us and always with us. And, that is why there is a possibility of celebrating Christmas with joy because they are there very near to us. Let us remember that Jesus though He was God, humbled Himself and was born in a manger.

Today there is a slogan which says, "Other world is possible. Other Christmas is also possible." When there is interior joy and happiness, there is neither squandering nor consumerism. When there is no interior joy and happiness, there is no Christmas, everything is from above as none can hide our sadness. So, friends, share your Christmas with the poor.

*Bro. Moses, cmsf
Franciscans Brothers,
Chilaw*



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