

## A Meditation on Advent.

“Ever since God created the world His everlasting power and Deity - however invisible - have been there for the human mind to see, in the things he has made St. Paul tells us in (Rom 1—20). St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Paul tell us God has been revealing His power beauty and goodness, from the beginning of time, through his creation. The natural world “the first bible” and “the book of experience” form the channels through which God revealed Himself to all cultures. People worshipped their gods in ‘mountains’ ‘old long-living trees’ and ‘big rivers’ as the sacred Ganges. In my country, Ireland, we have the history and tradition of the worship of gods in Newgrange, of druids, bards, and prayer circles, and of course the Celts who gave us a great Celtic heritage from pre Roman times.



But the heart of humanity was ‘restless’ as St. Augustine says, and seers, sages and prophets, true or false foretold of the coming of a Messiah, with echoes and dreams of a ‘Messianic age’. Around 700 BC the prophet Isaiah prophesied, ‘the Lord himself will give you a sign, the maiden is with child and will soon give birth to a son, whom she will call Emmanuel – God with us.’(Is.7—14) And in The Book of Consolations, Isaiah speaks many beautiful words of Peace, Happiness, Forgiveness and Healing to the people, comforting them, ‘arise, shine out for your light has come, the glory of Yahweh is rising on you’ (Is 60—11)

And in God’s time, the Virgin Mary of Nazareth conceived and gave birth to a son whom she called “Jesus” meaning Saviour, the birth took place in Bethlehem.

Shepherds in a nearby field heard Angels singing 'Glory to God in the Highest' and were given the message 'go to Bethlehem and see there what great things have come to pass, for this day is born to you a 'saviour', who is Christ the Lord'. Jesus meaning saviour, Christ meaning Messiah, the anointed one, and lord, Yahweh, Israel's God.

Traditionally, only priests, prophets and kings were anointed, this Jesus was of all three categories. And so they went, bringing some lambs, and they found Mary, with Joseph her betrothed and the child wrapped in swaddling clothes lying in a manger. Luke 2 1—20

"In the beginning was the 'word', and the 'word' was with God and the 'word' was God and the 'word' was made flesh and lived among us" (John 1 and 14) Now the great sign of Isaiah has come to pass.

From St. Francis's first image of the nativity scene, many images have emerged in art and craft. I imagine the stable at Bethlehem, I see Mary, the virgin mother and her child "Son of the Most High" in swaddling clothes lying in a manger, Joseph her betrothed in watchful care. The enormity of the scene presented before me, is credible, only as mystery, the mystery of the Incarnation, God Incarnate. Angels singing "Gloria in excelsis Deo". Jesus experienced the Glory of God as he said, "Glorify me Father, with the glory I had with you before ever the world was" (Jn. 17.3) but now I see before me a baby in abject poverty, base humility, and vulnerability. I ask why? to give us value, worth, hope, and dignity anew. Mary sitting with him, 'gentle woman, quiet, light' the model of womanhood, the Glory of Jerusalem, the highest honour of our race, and Joseph, the just man, angel guided also. There is comfort and warmth in this shelter, and a peace emanating from the scene, I remember the words of the prophet, prince of peace, consolation, mercy, healing, the forgiveness of sin. The abundant blessings of a bountiful God, who said

“you are precious in my eyes and I love you” I feel pervaded and permeated by this peace surrounding me and somehow connected with the central figure. I take my place sitting on the floor with the shepherds, my head bows in reverence, maybe awe, words fail me, there is a great silence ... “Silent night, Holy night” .....



*Venite Adoremus Dominum.*