

23rd December 2016



Advent is almost over.

In two days each of us will experience anew the great mystery of the Nativity. "When we wait for God, our waiting is a prayer; we testify to our own poverty and to His greatness" (Denis McBride: Seasons of the Word p. 12)

Let us ask Mary's help who carried Jesus in her womb, and who will be the source of our joy, wonder and thanksgiving, as we anticipate during these last days of Advent the birth of her son on Christmas Day.

As we do our last minute shopping, wrapping presents and writing cards, let us slow down and know some calm and joy, as we prepare to welcome Jesus, who became a child to save us, to encourage us and show us how to live.

On Christmas Eve/morning I look at the Crib. What do I see? A new-born baby lying in a manger. A fancy setting with lights, flowers, straw perhaps some background music, a painting lovingly painted with details of what the stable in Bethlehem might have looked like, holly, statues and a box with a label 'Donations for the Crib', or do I focus my whole



attention on the centre-piece - the Baby - the child Jesus? Do I really love Jesus? Do I allow Him to love me? (.....by their fruits .....Maybe ask a friend for the answer!) "Holiness is the constant struggle of letting Christ be the light that shines through everything we do" (Denis McBride: Seasons of the Word p. 25)

As we stand before the Crib and reflect on the scene, Wonder, Praise, Glory, Adoration, Thanksgiving should be in our heart and on our lips. We look upon the mystery of God who was made man and "pitched his tent among us" (John: 1:14)

Meditating on some of the Scripture readings during Christmas help us to keep our minds alert and prayerful. "To us a child is born, to us a Son is given. The government will be upon his shoulders .....Wonderful Councillor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Is: 9 :6)

Jesus was born over 2,000 years ago, but let him be born again, during this special season in our hearts, to fill us with joy, tenderness, forgiveness and compassion.

One of the special gifts of Christmas is Peace. Jesus comes to bring the gift of Peace to the world...."on earth Peace among people" (Lk: 2 :14) Christ is our true Peace. Each day Jesus knocks at the door of my heart hoping he will be invited in to share my joys and sorrows. He will give each of us lasting Peace if we listen to him. Let us try and be attentive to his knocking this Christmas season.

We read from one of Emeritus Pope Benedict's talks from a (CTS Booklet: Witnesses to the Risen Christ p. 40)

"In the poor Grotto in Bethlehem shines a very bright light, a reflection of the profound mystery which envelopes that Child, which Mary and Joseph cherish in their hearts, and which can be seen from their expression, in their actions, and especially in their silence. They preserve in their inmost depths the words of the Angel's Annunciation message to Mary: 'the Child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God' " (Lk: 1 :35)

We look at the Holy family - Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Ideally every child coming into the world should be welcomed by the warmth of a family. External comforts may not matter. Jesus was born in a stable and had a manger for his first cradle, but the love of Mary and Joseph made him feel the tenderness and beauty of being loved.



Let us remember in prayer this Christmas, mothers, expectant mothers, and new mothers, that they and the father of their child/ren will always cherish and lovingly care for them.

Pope Francis in *Amoris Laetitia* 97 says: "Yet what really makes us important is a love that understands, shows concern and embraces the weak". And again in 174: "Dear mothers: Thank you, thank you for what you are in your family and for what you give to the Church and to the world".

Let us walk with Mary and Joseph these last couple of days of Advent. As they went about their daily routine they shared a single common centre of attention - Jesus. We ask Mary to pray for us, and like her to keep "all these things pondering them in her (our) heart" (Lk:2 :19-51)

Christmas thoughts - Anonymous

"It's sharing your gifts, not purchasing gifts; It's not wrapping presents, it's being present and wrapping your arms around the ones you love. It's not getting Christmas cards out in time, it's sending any cards, anytime, at the right time. It's not having the biggest and best Christmas light display, it's displaying the Christ light that comes from your heart; It's not Santa coming down the chimney, It's Jesus coming down from Heaven, and giving us the gift of Eternal life".

Let us remember: What lies behind us, and what lies before us, are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

Happy Christmas to each of you

Sr. Margaret Shanahan

