

Meditations: 25 December

Some reflections that can help us welcome the Child Jesus' arrival this Christmas.

- Contemplating with faith the mystery of Christmas
- God has wanted to need us
- Our contemplation before the crib

“A CHILD IS BORN FOR US, and a son is given to us.”^[1] Our longings during Advent have been fulfilled: God has become man. The world is no longer in darkness. Jesus has come, and “all the ends of the earth have seen the

salvation of our God.”^[2] The Child smiles at our silent adoration. Our gaze meets the gaze of the newborn Child. Everything is light and a clean look penetrates our soul and dispels the darkness of sin.

Saint Josemaría recommended that we “look at the Child, our Love, in the cradle. We must look at him, aware that we are facing a mystery. We need to accept this mystery through faith and, also through faith, delve deep into its content. For this, we must have the humble attitude of a Christian soul: not wanting to reduce the greatness of God to our own poor ideas, to our human explanations; but rather understanding that this mystery, for all its darkness, is a light to guide men’s lives.”^[3] The heavens and the earth were created by the Child lying in the manger. He designed the roundness of the globe and its fullness. What madness of love that of Jesus! He who lives in the

heavens is lying on straw. He who fills and sustains everything with his presence has taken on flesh like ours. We can take the one who created us in our arms: this is the great mystery that Christmas places before our eyes.

Come and see, we are told; come and see the wonder. Shepherds and kings, rich and poor, powerful and weak crowd around the cradle. We too want to come closer, to prostrate ourselves before this defenceless Child, to look at Mary and Joseph, who are tired but happier perhaps than anyone has ever been on earth. We cannot comprehend such a great mystery. God has clothed himself in our flesh.

HOW WE WOULD LIKE to be able to thank God for making Himself so close, touchable, vulnerable. We dare to kiss the King of the universe, of whom no images could be made in

the Old Covenant, and yet now He has become one of us. *Adeste, fideles... Venite, adoremus....* We have been called, we have seen, and now our heart rejoices: there is the Child God. “Christians,” Saint Leo the Great said, “recognise your dignity. You have been made a sharer in the divine nature: do not degrade yourself with your former vileness. Remember of whose head and whose body you are a member. Remember that, torn from the power of darkness, you have been transferred to the light and to the kingdom of God.”^[4] Almighty God is presented to us as a newborn Child in the cave at Bethlehem. “He is not even born in his parents’ house, but in transit, to show in reality that he was born as if on borrowed time in that humanity of his which he took.”^[5]

“Every time Christmas comes around,” Saint Josemaría said, “I love to look at representations of the

Child Jesus. Those figures, which show us our Lord humbling himself, remind me that God is calling us, that the Almighty has wished to present himself as helpless, wanting to have need of men. From the cradle at Bethlehem, Christ tells you and me that he needs us. He urges us to live Christian lives without ifs and buts, lives of self-sacrifice, work and joy. We will never attain genuine good humour, if we are not really trying to imitate Jesus; if we are not, like him, humble. I repeat: Have you seen where God's greatness is hidden? In a manger, in swaddling clothes, in a stable. The redemptive effectiveness of our lives can only come into action through humility, by our ceasing to think about ourselves and feeling the responsibility to help others.”^[6]

WE WILL ADORE OUR HIDDEN GOD during these days, every time we come near to kiss and caress the Child. Who can fail to draw near to

God, to draw close to the Child, now that He stretches out His arms to us, now that He needs our care! During these days our thoughts will be drawn to his birth. Like the shepherds who left their flocks behind, we humbly approach the cradle.

These are days especially suited for contemplation and for family life. We can pray in front of the crib and adore God in silence. So much is purified during these days when our acts of love are so intense! “Keep your Christmas as a feast of the home,” Saint Paul VI said. “Christ, in coming into the world, sanctified human life in its first age, infancy. He sanctified the family, and especially motherhood. He sanctified the home, the cradle of the most intimate and universal natural affections ... Try to celebrate your Christmas, if possible, with your loved ones. Give the gift of your affection, of your faithfulness to

that family from which you have received your existence.”^[7]

Facing the crib, together with Mary and Joseph, we see that “God does not love you because you think and act the right way. He loves you, plain and simple. His love is unconditional; it does not depend on you. You may have mistaken ideas, you may have made a complete mess of things, but the Lord continues to love you. How often do we think that God is good to us if we are good and punishes us if we are bad. Yet that is not how he is. For all our sins, he continues to love us. His love does not change. It is not fickle; it is faithful. It is patient. This is the gift we find at Christmas. We discover to our amazement that the Lord is absolute gratuity, absolute tender love. His glory does not overwhelm us; his presence does not terrify us. He is born in utter poverty in order to win our hearts by the wealth of his love.”^[8] Our Lady and

Saint Joseph are our first family with whom we want to live this new Christmas.

^[1] Nativity of the Lord, Mass of the Day, Entrance Antiphon.

^[2] *Ibid.*, Communion Antiphon.

^[3] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, 13.

^[4] Saint Leo the Great, Sermon I on the Nativity of the Lord, 3.

^[5] Saint Gregory the Great, *Homilies on the Gospels*, 8.

^[6] Saint Josemaría, *Christ Is Passing By*, 18.

^[7] Saint Paul VI, General Audience, 18 December 1963.

^[8] Pope Francis, Homily, 24 December 2019.

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