

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST

December 2019

Unto us a child is born



For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Is. 9, 6).

God wishes us to be “sharers in His own creative dream”, (Pope Francis in Tokyo), so He gives us all the means to participate in His holy design for our world and for our life. He created us in His image and, in His infinite love for mankind, willed to become one of us and be born of the Virgin Mary. Through the Incarnation, God shared, in Christ Jesus, our human nature, our flesh and blood, our human condition – sin excepted.

Through His Cross and Resurrection Jesus reconciled us to God and having set us free from the clutches of sin and death has called us to the light of His kingdom.

The Son of God became Son of Man for love of us, each one of us! This is how precious each man, woman and child are in God’s heart!

As the prophet Isaiah has said: “unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given”; this child, this son is no other than the Holy Infant of Bethlehem.

Born for us, born to live among us and in this way to tell us of the Father’s love; a love surpassing understanding, culminating on the death on the cross, but not stopping there: the Resurrection validates everything that Jesus taught and did. The light of Christmas and the glory of the Resurrection mark the summit and the fulfillment of God’s “dream” for us.

Now is the time to receive God’s grace and welcome Him to be “born in our heart”; then, the light of Christmas will lead us to the light of the Risen Lord!

May the glory and joy of Christmas be a sign of hope to all those who struggle in the darkness.

A Saviour has been born to you

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night.

An angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them,

“Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; He is Christ the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger”.

Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests”.

(Luke, 2, 8-14)

It happened on Christmas Day

In **498** the king of the Franks Clovis I receives the holy Baptism.

The Holy Father Saint John-Paul II during his visit in France 1,500 years later, in 1998, put the following question to the Christians in the country, which awakened many a conscience: "*People of France, what have you done with your Baptism?*"

In **1223** Saint Francis of Assisi, in Greccio, makes the first Christmas crèche, a much-loved custom in the Christian world ever since!

In **1651** in Massachusetts, in New England, the General Court of Justice imposes the fine of five shillings (the equivalent of the average monthly salary) to whomever celebrates Christmas "and other such days"! Only in 1831 does Christmas become a public holiday in the United States of America, first in Louisiana and Arkansas.

In **1769** the first Holy Eucharist is celebrated in New Zealand.

In **1818** the most-loved hymn "Silent Night" is first heard in Obendorf, Austria.

In **1990** the digital system which will eventually be known as the *World Wide Web* is crowned with success.

Above: St. Francis instituting the Crib at Greccio; fresco by Giotto (1266-1337); basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, Italy



The Prophets

Since the Old Testament times, God has gradually been preparing mankind for the coming of His Son.

A principal role in this long preparation has been played by **the Prophets**, who through their prophetic work castigated their society's wrong-doings, condemned the distancing from God, warned against the consequences of sin and stated with clarity and without compromise their faith in the Unique God.

Many among them have, in a remarkable manner, outlined the figure and coming of the Messiah, i.e. of the Christ.

The liturgy of the Church proposes, on a daily basis, to us their texts, either in the "Prayers of the Hours", or as daily meditations and, certainly, during the Holy Eucharist, since the first reading is usually taken from the Book of the Prophets.

So, listening to the ancient prophesies we, in our turn, become better prepare to receive the good news of the Gospel and approach Christ with faith.

In the New Testament times the charisma of Prophecy is expressed through the teaching of the Doctrine of Faith and through admonition.

Above: Prophet Joel, fresco by Michelangelo (1475-1564), at the Vatican, Rome.



Did you know...



The "Advent Crown", i.e. the ring with the four candles we light up during the period of Advent, symbolizes our spiritual wakefulness and readiness to receive Jesus Christ's birth.

For that reason we light up one candle on each Sunday of Advent, until –right before Christmas, all four candles are lit.

The ring, being circular, denotes life itself –the circle having no beginning and no end; its fresh green decorations taken from evergreens symbolize the ever present and active energy of the Holy Spirit.

*

The Christmas tree that fills us with warmth and joy at its sight stands for the human being, which although rooted on earth, looks up to the sky and stretches himself upwards to heaven.

Its lights and glitter are the light and grace the soul gets from God.

Prayer is the breath of life

To breathe is to live; to cease to breathe is to die. The first and most necessary thing for the newly born then begun ceases only with the



breath is to die. The first and most necessary thing for the newly born then begun ceases only with the

For the whole duration of time breath, life is sustained by breathing according as the breath is itself deep breathes does the body live. What is said of the soul and prayer. For the soul, to pray is to live; to cease to pray is to die.

between the first and the last and, in fact, is strong or weak or shallow. Only as the body said of the body and breath may be

The first and most necessary thing for the soul is to turn to God its Maker who made it in His Own Image for Himself—and to turn to God is to pray. Its whole life is to be attached to the very Principle of Life, which is God that is to pray. Only as it prays does the soul live. Prayer is the breath of its life.

The motion of life comes before everything else. It is necessary to live before anything else is possible. All motion of mind or body issues from life as from its source, as water springs from a well. So it is with the soul. The soul is holy by the holiness of God. It is union with Him that enables the soul to draw its life from Him—and union with Him is prayer. Prayer then is the most vital thing imaginable for the soul. To pray is to live; not to pray is to die.

To think of prayer as the breath of life and as utterly indispensable as breath to live is to think of it as it should be thought of, and to pray accordingly is to pray as one should pray.

Mother Teresa on Prayer



Faith is a gift of God. Without it there would be no life. And our work, to be fruitful, and to be all for God, and to be beautiful, has to be built on faith – faith in Christ, who has said, I was hungry, I was naked, I was sick, and I was homeless, and you ministered to me. On these words of His, our work is based.

*For **prayer is nothing else than being on terms of friendship with God.***

God speaks in the silence of the heart. Listening is the beginning of

prayer.

God thirst to love and be loved by you-that is how precious you are to Him.

He wants us to be more childlike, more humble, more grateful in prayer, to remember we all belong to the mystical body of Christ, which is praying always.

If you feel unimportant in the eyes of the world, that matters not at all. For God, there is no one any more important in the entire world than you.

Let no one ever come to you without coming away better and happier.

*Love to pray. Feel often during the day the need for prayer, and take trouble to pray. **Prayer enlarges the heart until it is capable of containing God's gift of Himself.** Ask and seek, and your heart will grow big enough to receive Him and keep Him as your own.*

From the Holy Father's homily in Tokyo, 25/11/2019

The Lord's words act as a refreshing balm, when he tells us not to be troubled but to trust. Three times he insists: "Do not be anxious about your life... about tomorrow" (cf. Mt 6:25.31.34). This is not an encouragement to ignore what happens around us or to be irresponsible about our daily duties and responsibilities. Instead, it is an invitation to set our priorities against a broader horizon of meaning and thus find the freedom to see things his way: **"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well"** (Mt 6:33).

The Lord is not telling us that basic necessities like food and clothing are unimportant. Rather, he invites us to re-evaluate our daily decisions and not to become trapped or isolated in the pursuit of success at any cost, including the cost of our very lives. Worldly attitudes that look only to one's own profit or gain in this world, and a selfishness that pursues only individual happiness, in reality leave us profoundly unhappy and enslaved, and hinder the authentic development of a truly harmonious and humane society.

Our world, teeming with life and beauty, is above all a precious gift of the Creator: "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Gen 1:31). God offers us this beauty and goodness so that we can share it and offer it to others, not as masters or owners, but as sharers in God's same creative dream. "Genuine care for our own lives and our relationships with nature is inseparable from fraternity, justice and faithfulness to others" (Laudato Si', 70).