



The Diocese of Mandeville

Christmas Reflections

VOLUME 21, ISSUE 2

DECEMBER 2015



From the Desk of the Bishop:

My dear Brothers and Sisters,

Our life's journey is found in the story of the Magi's search for the newborn child and bowing down before him in homage (Mt 2:1-12). There is a deep longing within each one of us for a love that will fill our hearts and heal our wounds.

As the Magi gazed into the night sky they search and look for what cannot be found here on earth and in their lives without knowing they were looking for a sign of God's presence and will. They remained awake and attentive for a sign of that which they sought.

In the Gospels, Jesus will tell his disciples "Be awake, pray and be on guard. You do not know the hour the Son of Man will come." The Magi teach us that we must be attentive; we must search and struggle to see the sign. Prayerful reflection, longing and sight are necessary. The Gospels are

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filled with miracles where Jesus gives sight to the blind. We too need this vision. As we search for the Lord we must be open to new possibilities. God's ways are not our ways. Just as the disciples slept while Jesus prayed in the garden so to we may miss the hour of glory because we are asleep.

Having seen the Star, the Magi set out on a journey. It is a long, perilous and difficult journey. They must leave behind their homes, families and lives as they knew them. Not certain of the way, they must be courageous and brave. Their journey took courage and strength. Not knowing precisely where the journey would end they took a risk that was dangerous and difficult.

We too must be people of decisive action. We must be doers. It is not enough to read and interpret the signs of the times. Understanding and vision are a call to action. A disciple is a doer of the Word. We must leave behind the old self and move into the light. Too often we merely talk and dreams never become reality.

As the Magi lose their way, they seek help and guidance. King Herod and all of Jerusalem were frightened and upset. Herod will seek to use these innocent searchers for his own purpose. How often do we seek guidance and wisdom from those we trust and they fail us? Truth does not depend on who speaks but what is said. The lesson here is important. Expect opposition. Whenever good people enter into a spiritual journey, they will be opposed. The more clearly and confidently you walk that road, the more opposition you will find. There is very little opposition when all are in darkness. When you see the light, expect obstacles.



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Did you ever notice that the shepherds in the Christmas story have no names? What endures today - much like fossils of ancient realities - is their witness to the breaking in of God on a dark night. It must have seemed even darker after the angels had dispatched their message and were gone. Then came the moment of decision: Let's go see if we can find this Messiah. If we were to make this same decision, we too might return anew to our duties "glorifying and praising God" for what we have seen and heard.—*Sr. Faith Okerson, S.B.S.*

"God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son" Thus, God's love surrounds us infusing us with the joy and peace of Christmas. Love is active. It is revealed in deeds of love and mercy: forgiving, sharing, listening, comforting. Our love of Jesus is only genuine when lived in this way and directed to all God's creation. Enveloped in God's love we know that this love changes everything.—*Sr. Una O'Connor*

The season of advent and Christmas can be summarized in one word: **Sharing**—God sharing His life with us. God who is Divine, becomes human, in order that we can become divine.

Christmas is also a time for sharing of our gifts and talents. There is really only one gift at Christmas and that is Jesus coming to us. We can make a return gift to Jesus, a return gift of our lives pleasing to Him. What better gift can we give to Jesus at Christmas than to have lived Advent in union with Him? What better gift can we give to Jesus than to have removed from our lives this Advent anything and everything that keeps us apart from Jesus? What better gift can we give to Jesus at Christmas than to be able to say to Him, "During Advent I reformed my life because I love you as my Lord"? *If there is anything therefore in our lives that is not pleasing to Jesus we can use this time of Advent to break with sin and leave sin behind so that we can stay awake and pray waiting for Jesus.* We want to give Jesus this gift of our lives because just as Jeremiah looked to Jesus as God's promise, we look to Jesus this Advent as God's promise in our lives. Jeremiah lived through a desperate and broken world. We live now in broken world. The only way to fix our broken world is to mend and repair it with Christ. Christ is the solution to our own broken world within and without. Merry Christmas to all. - *Fr. Paschal Cuthina, C.P.*

The Good News of Jesus Christ brings Hope, Peace, Joy and love. To model the actions of Jesus, to be the catalyst of change, and to be guided into selfless and loving service to all the people of God, we must endeavor to perform deep intrusive inspection of conscience so that we do not become the very stumbling block in the lives of the people we profess to love and care about.

To serve beyond measure, we must ask ourselves the question, "What would Jesus do?" When we act accordingly, only then can we live out our purpose-driven life and become the "hands and feet" of Christ.—*Hope Wood-Salmon.*



Christmas takes on special meaning for us this year because it coincides with the Jubilee Year of Mercy. In the opening lines of the proclamation, Pope Francis states that "Jesus is the face of the Father's mercy!" As followers of Jesus, who is born on Christmas Day, we are also called to be the "face of the Father's mercy" to all. Let us walk in mercy! - *Brother John McDonnell, F.S.C.*

“Be Transformed” cont’d

Too often we don’t understand that there is a price to be paid for our mission and vocation. To find the Lord does not come easily.

When the Magi find the child, they bow down in homage, open the coffers and offer gifts of gold, incense and myrrh. They give the best they have to this heavenly child. The journey is not merely to find the new born king but to give oneself. So too we must break open our hearts and offer to Jesus Christ the gift of ourselves. It is a life of sacrifice and service that we are called to. To whom do you give the best

that you have? The journey of the Magi is a journey of love and of giving gifts.

Finally the Magi are warned not to return the way they came. How true it is. You never come to Christ and go back the same way. To break open your heart,

bow down in homage and give yourself to Christ means that you will change, be transformed. The journey of life continues. Step by step we become new. When you bow down in adoration this Christmas, expect you will not remain unchanged once you have adored him.

I pray that this Christmas season you set out on a journey with the Magi to find the word made flesh, born in a manger as food for the journey. May you bow down in homage to give yourself to Him.

Yours in Christ,
The Most. Rev. Neil Tiedemann, C.P.



Part of the mystery that we are celebrating at this time is that this Word of God, instrumental in our life and existence, becomes flesh, becomes human. The creative word becomes a creature sharing the very condition of the creatures he has created. He truly becomes one with us sharing our joys and our sorrows. He became hungry, tempted, experienced every ordinary experience of a human being without falling into sin. What a great honor! What a great noble act on the part of God to come to our condition out of love.

Brothers and sisters, Christmas day is a day to relish the grace and love of God coming to us through the Word made flesh, making us sharers in his sonship so that we could be divine.

Merry Christmas!!!! - *Fr. Thomas Ngigi*

Let us pause before the Child, let us pause in silence... let us thank the Lord for having given Jesus to us, and ... let us raise from the depths of our hearts the praises of his fidelity: We bless you, Lord God most high, who lowered yourself for our sake. You are immense, and you made yourself small; you are rich and you made yourself poor; you are all-powerful and you made yourself vulnerable.

On this night let us share the joy of the Gospel: God loves us, he so loves us that he gave us his Son to be our brother, to be light in our darkness.

—**Pope Francis**
(Christmas Mass, Dec 2013, St. Peter’s Basilica)



“Reflections” cont'd



It is Christmas every time you let God love others through you... yes, it is Christmas every time you smile at your brother and offer him your hand. -

Mother Teresa

“In switching on the light of the Nativity scene, we wish for the light of Christ to be in us. A Christmas without light is not Christmas. Let there be light in the soul, in the heart; let there be forgiveness to others; let there be no hostilities, which are dark. Let there be the beautiful light of Jesus. This is my wish for all of you, when you turn on the light of the crib.”

“ ... If you have something dark in your soul, ask the Lord for forgiveness. Christmas is a great opportunity to cleanse the soul. Do not fear, the priest is merciful, forgiving all in the name of God, because God forgives everything.”

- **Pope Francis** –lighting the Christmas tree, Gubbio, Italy. Dec 2014

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of you... The baby Jesus in the manger brings JOY to all of us. The meaning of joy is this...J for Jesus, O for Others and Y for You. when we put Jesus and others first in our life we experience the JOY....May baby Jesus bless all of us...Peace.— **Fr. Benzen Valiyaveetil C.P**



Celebrate the feast of Christmas every day, even every moment in the interior temple of your spirit, remaining like a baby in the bosom of the heavenly Father, where you will be reborn each moment in the Divine Word, Jesus Christ.

- **St. Paul of the Cross**

Published By: The Diocese of Mandeville, Communications Office

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Printed by:

Alpha Institute

26 South Camp Road, Kingston 4

Tel: (876) 930-2200