

Sunday, December 25, 2016

The Nativity of the Lord

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

1st Reading: Isaiah 52:7-10

2nd Reading: Hebrews 1:1-6

Responsorial: Psalm 98:1-6

Gospel: John 1:1-18

Seeing God's Humility and His Plan for Us in the Birth of Jesus

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. (John 1:14)

The date: December 1223. The place: Greccio, Italy. The problem: a man living in poverty lamenting that his town's observance of Christmas had become overshadowed by materialism. Distraught, the man did something extreme. He gathered some friends together, along with some livestock, and re-created the scene at the manger. It was a moving experience for many people, and over the years, the practice spread across the world. The man was St. Francis of Assisi, and the practice—which every parish around the world has since adopted—was the traditional nativity scene.

About six hundred years later, a priest in France was so full of joy at the sight of a nativity scene that he found his heart melting. "Who can describe the joy of the feast of Christmas?" he asked. Then, moved by the Holy Spirit, he wrote a homily that described three acts of humility that were at the heart of this great feast.

The first act of humility was God's plan for his Son to take on our human nature and become a man like us in all things but sin. The second act of humility was Jesus coming to us as a helpless baby entrusted to the care of two human beings. The third act of humility was God's decision to have his Son born into poverty. That priest was St. John Vianney, known as the Curé of Ars and the patron of all priests.

As Christians celebrate Jesus' birth today, let's follow the example of these two great saints. Let's fix our eyes on the baby Jesus and make him the first priority of our day. Let's carve out some private time with him in prayer before all the celebrations begin. Maybe you can even gather the family and pray together.

And let's contemplate God's humility and his magnificent plan for us—a plan that was grounded in what is unquestionably the most dramatic act of humility ever.

"O come, let us adore him!"

(Many thanks to **The Word Among Us** for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission. For more information on how to subscribe to their devotional magazine, go to www.wau.org).

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. In the first reading, we hear these words, “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, and saying to Zion, ‘Your God is King.’” Each of us as Christians is called to bring to others this good news of God’s love that is revealed in the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
 - Who in your family, or friends and neighbors and co-workers, needs to hear this good news?
 - What steps can you take to bring it to them?
2. The responsorial psalm tells us to sing joyfully and sing praise to the Lord. Why? Because “he has done wondrous deeds,” “his right hand has won victory for him, his holy arm,” and “The Lord has made his salvation known.”
 - If someone were to ask you the source of your joy and peace during this Christmas Season, how would you answer them?
3. The second reading tells us that “in these last days God has spoken to us through his Son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe.”
 - How does Jesus “speak” to you, e.g., through the Scriptures or in prayer?
 - What difference has it made in your life?
4. The second reading goes on to tell us that God’s glory and majesty are in Jesus because he is “the very imprint of his being.”
 - How would you describe the ways that Jesus has demonstrated that he is “the very imprint” of God’s being?
5. The Gospel reading, like the second reading, describes in majestic words who Jesus is from “the beginning with God.” We also hear these words, “But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man’s decision but of God.”
 - What do these words from the Gospel reading mean to you?
 - How would you describe the impact in your life of personally “accepting” Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?
6. The meditation describes the impact that the birth of Jesus had on St. Francis of Assisi and St. John Vianney. It ends with these words: “As Christians celebrate Jesus’ birth today, let’s follow the example of these two great saints. Let’s fix our eyes on the baby Jesus and make him the first priority of our day. Let’s carve out some private time with him in prayer before all the celebrations begin. Maybe you can even gather the family and pray together. And let’s contemplate God’s humility and his magnificent plan for us—a plan that was grounded in what is unquestionably the most dramatic act of humility ever.”
 - In the midst of the busyness of this Christmas Season, what steps can you take to spend time in prayer meditating on the birth of Jesus, contemplating “God’s humility and his magnificent plan for us”, and worshiping the Lord?
 - What can you do to make the truths of the Christian season more real to your family?
7. Take some time now to pray that this Christmas Season would be a special time of grace for you and all your loved ones, and be a time to worship and adore the Lord in a deeper way. Use the words below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

“O come, let us adore him!”

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is in partner relations for **The Word Among Us Partners**, (<http://www.waupartners.org/>); a ministry of **The Word Among Us** (www.wau.org) to the military, prisoners, women with crisis pregnancies or who have had abortions, and college students. He is also a member of the **National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal** (<http://www.nsc-chariscenter.org/>) and a member of the board of directors of the **Christlife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization**

As posted on the Catholic Charismatic Renewal National Service Committee’s website: www.nsc-chariscenter.org

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