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Holiness Firmness Truthfulness Faithfulness



Q4 2023 Edition

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“Kadosh” In Jewish thinking, “The Holy One, blessed be He” (hakkadosh, barukh hu) is one of the most commonly used designation for God. “Marian” is a given name, the Hebrew meaning of Marian is “the precious one” or “unique from the word” or “Mariam”

Kadosh Marian Ministries is a non-profit organization with its roots across the world. It is also established since 1994 as an approved charitable trust in UK, subsequently in India and New York. Kadosh Marian Ministries obtained approval for the area of operation to include USA, Canada, Europe, Asia, Middle East and Africa with the following objectives: -

- Conducting certificate oriented theological courses duly awarded by Catholic Dioceses, and various international accredited universities.
- Conducting Charismatic Renewal services to revive the trooping spirit of the flagging faithful.
- Administering Sacraments by ordained Catholic Priests and Bishops.
- Promoting devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Immaculate Heart of Mary.
- Conducting guidance, counselling and healing through deliverance services to the needy, lonely and the afflicted ones.
- Visiting refugee camps, hospitals and providing food, clothes and medicines.
- Helping the needy with basic needs and providing comfort and confidence to build a new life
- Supporting Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales financially for their missions in Africa and Asia.
- Supporting various dioceses and churches across the world for evangelization.

We welcome you to join us, slake the thirst, and enjoy the abundance of Spirit of the Sovereign Lord – Immanuel. All the above charitable activities are routed in consultation with Catholic Priests and Bishops.

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# EDITORIALY

"GOD'S GLORY IS MAN ALIVE!"



**EARNEST PETER KANDATHIL**  
MANAGING EDITOR, LONDON

**J**esus came down and assumed the life of a man not only to give life but to give life in abundance to humanity, while temporarily setting aside the equality of divinity with God. It is important, therefore, to reflect upon a concise yet profound phrase written by our first theologian, **Bishop Irenaeus of Lyons**: "**God's glory is man alive!**"

It requires theological courage to assert that God's glory depends on anything other than God Himself. This affirmation carries a particular irony in our modern age, where death seems to prevail over life. Death lurks not only in impoverished areas but also in the streets and sidewalks of wealthy cities.

However, this statement requires thorough explanation for the ordinary mind to grasp its meaning. **Walter J. Burghardsdt** attempted to expound upon it by breaking it down into three stages. According to him, the phrase "man alive" encompasses three facets.

Interestingly, another early theologian, **Clement of Alexandria**, perceptively recognized the reflection of God in three aspects: *life, good life, and eternal life*.

Let us analyze each of these facets.

**Firstly, life:** Being alive, breathing, and simply existing as a human being is a glorious mystery. Life is a gift from God, who is the source of all that is good and perfect. The gift of life is not merely a transaction of exchanging presents but rather a sharing in the divine life of God, whose essence can be summed up in the pithy phrase: "He who is." You and I live because He lives. Life is a sacred gift, founded on the divine love of God. We share our existence with the plant and animal kingdoms, with stones and stars, with the sun and the rain. However, what sets us apart as human beings is our unique ability to know and our freedom to love. We possess the power of intellect and will. We are individuals, persons created in the image of God. Life is sacred and mirrors the divine life like no other. Therefore, those who uphold the dignity of human life recognize its sanctity from conception to natural death, valuing the rights of the unborn as well as the dignity of the elderly.

**Secondly, good life:** God's glory is manifested in the alive human being. Merely possessing a mind, will, understanding, and passion does not make us truly alive in a human sense. Dictators throughout history, such as Herod and Hitler, have displayed purpose and passion, but their actions have led to destruction and death. Sinners, too, have been remarkably alive in their sins. Knowledge and freedom indeed reflect the image of God, who is mind and love. However, knowledge and freedom alone are not enough to mirror the divine. It is essential to dynamize their potential.

**Thomas Aquinas** resolved this dilemma by distinguishing between two ways of desiring knowledge. One way is desiring knowledge for the sake of personal perfection, which is the desire of philosophers. The other way is desiring knowledge as a means to be present with the one you love, the way saints desire it.

The human spirit is inherently curious and constantly seeks truth. Geneticists, physicists, and behavioral psychologists continually explore the frontiers of freedom. This embodied spirit, on its quest for reality and truth, can either focus solely on itself or bring individuals together in love. Knowledge has the power to destroy or unite, to kill or create, to evoke compassion or breed envy, hatred, and war. Our knowledge, our awareness, reflects the mind of God when directed towards compassion, creativity, peace, oneness, and love. The God we seek to mirror is the God in whom understanding and love are one, the God whose self-revelation is a gift of love—a reflection of His total self-giving.

The act of creation, where God shares His life and goodness, demonstrates His love bursting forth to give what is His. He encloses His perfection within something imperfect yet very good (Genesis 1:31). Furthermore, redemption reveals God's self-sacrifice unto death so that humanity may come

# EDITORIALY

alive again. This is what human life mirrors, whether it's Mother Teresa caring for the crippled in Calcutta or Martin Luther King bleeding and dying for the sake of unity between black and white.

Lastly, eternal life: The good life mentioned earlier, where knowing leads to loving, hints at the third facet: eternal life. As Jesus explains, eternal life is to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3). It is to love God, His Christ, and every human person with a love born of God and His grace.

Eternal life does not commence with physical death; it has its roots in the past, in the new life that emerged from Christ's death. It extends into the future, signifying ceaseless life with the One who is life. However, eternal life also begins in the present. It is a reality here and now. As Jesus proclaimed, "If anyone loves me, my Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them" (John 14:23). Eternal life is a participation in the divine life, a communion with God that begins in this earthly existence and continues into eternity.

To summarize, the phrase "God's glory is man alive" encompasses the three facets of life, good life, and eternal life. Human life, as a gift from God, reflects His glory and is sacred from its beginning to its natural end. The good life is realized when our knowledge and freedom are directed towards love, compassion, and unity. Finally, eternal life is a participation in the divine life, a communion with God that begins in this life and continues into eternity.

This phrase reminds us of the profound truth that our existence as human beings is intertwined with the glory of God. It calls us to recognize the sacredness of life, to use our knowledge and freedom for the greater good, and to embrace the invitation to eternal life in communion with God.

JOY TO THE WORLD, JESUS HAS COME TO BRING US LIFE IN ABUNDANCE.  
(JOHN 10:10) HALLELUJAH!!!

On behalf of Kadosh Marian Ministries we wish all the readers,

MERRY  
*Christmas*

AND HAPPY NEW YEAR

**2024**





# A CHRISTMAS SYNODAL JOURNEY OF JOY AND CELEBRATION



**BISHOP ALEX VADAKUMTHALA**

BISHOP OF KANNUR

## Christmas and New Year 2024 Reflections

As we bask in the warmth of Christmas and New Year celebrations, it is essential to ponder the profound message encapsulated in the biblical verse, “the good news of great joy”; (Luke 2:10). The Christmas narrative, from the humble manger to the revelation of the Christ child, unfolds a synodal journey that has changed the course of human history. Let us explore how we can continue to experience this “good news of great joy” in our lives.

### **God dwells among His People**

At the heart of the Christmas story lies the awe-inspiring truth of the Incarnation – God taking on human form to dwell among His people. “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9). The profound reality of God’s presence among us is a source of immense joy and hope. The assurance of Jesus to his disciples, “I will be with you always” (Mt 28:20), was indeed a strong assurance for them. This was His final encouragement to a group of people whose world had been turned upside down and inside out! This assurance strengthened them in their missionary journey, even when they encountered adversities and endured challenges and sufferings. The Christmas season helped us to reflect on the significance of God’s love made manifest in the vulnerability of a new-born child. The good news is: God dwells with us! And, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31).

### **Mary’s Fiat: An Example of Total Freedom and Dialogue**

In the annunciation narrative, Mary becomes a beacon of profound faith and openness. In prayer and



silence, she listens to the angel Gabriel, embracing an atmosphere of total freedom and dialogue with the divine. Her response, “Here I am the handmaid of the Lord” Luke 1:38), signifies a complete surrender to God’s will. Mary’s fiat becomes a model for us to approach our own synodal journey with openness, humility, and a willingness to embrace the unexpected.

### **Joseph’s Search for Answers: Listening to God in Doubt**

Joseph, portrayed in the Gospels as a just and righteous man, grapples with doubts and questions upon discovering Mary’s pregnancy. In the midst of uncertainty, he listens to God and obeys the angel’s guidance: “He did as the angel of the Lord told him to do” (Matthew 1:24). Joseph’s example encourages us to seek answers in prayer and discernment, trusting in God’s plan even when faced with challenges. His unwavering faith becomes a guiding light for our synodal journey, reminding us of the importance of listening to God amidst doubts and uncertainties.

### **Journey to Bethlehem: Facing Difficulties with Hope**

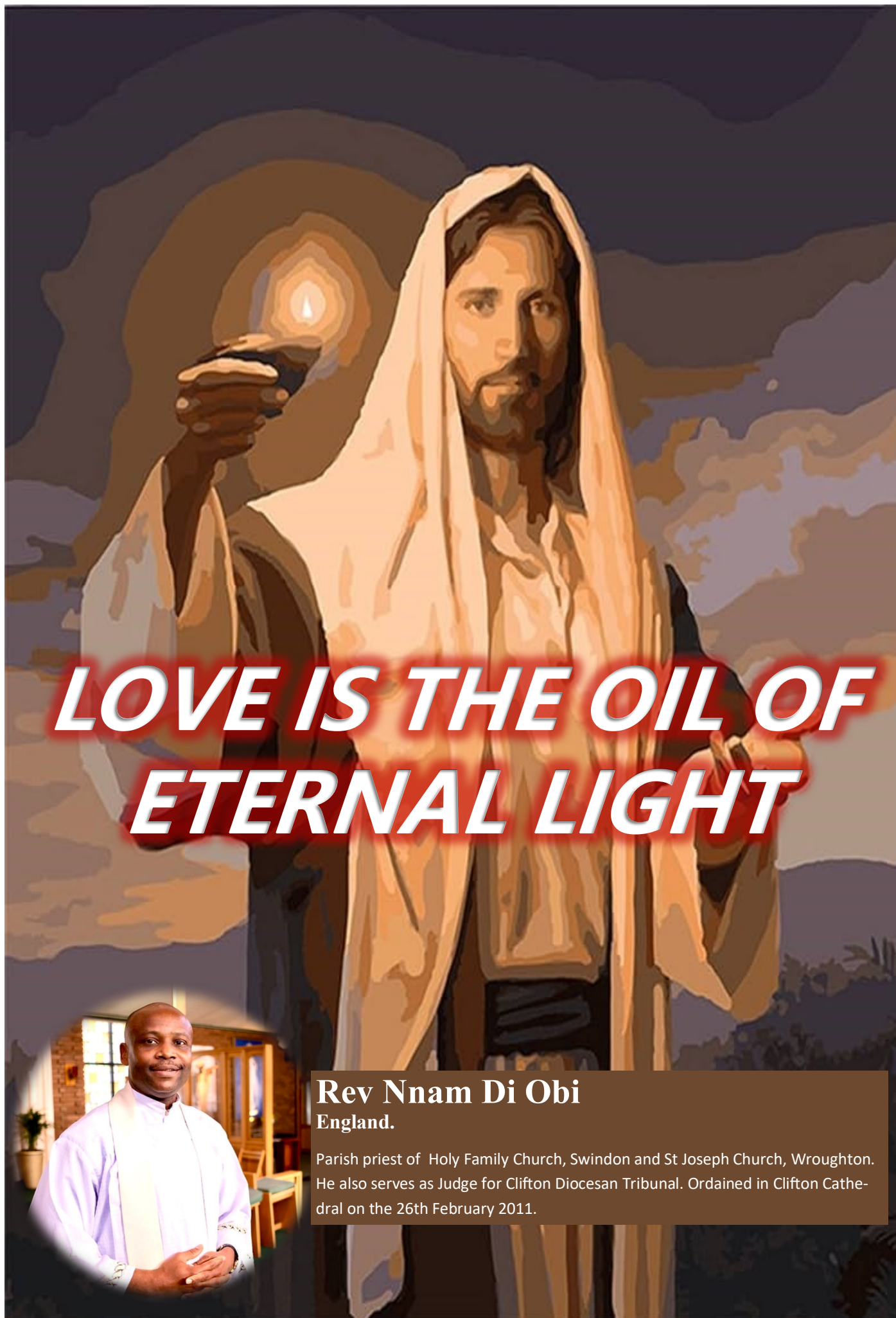
Mary and Joseph embark on a synodal journey to Bethlehem, facing difficulties and struggles along the way. The challenges culminate in the stark reality that “there was no place for them in any inn.” Yet, within the humble surroundings of a stable, amidst the silence and grace of the manger, the divine plan unfolds. The Christmas narrative teaches us that our own journey may be fraught with challenges, but with hope and trust in God, we can find meaning and purpose in the midst of adversity.

### **The Shepherds and Wise Kings: Openness, Joy, and Exploration**

The poor shepherds, attentive to the angels’ proclamation, exemplify openness, joy, and a readiness to explore. Their simplicity becomes a poignant reminder that the good news of great joy is accessible to all, regardless of social status. Similarly, the three wise kings, guided by a star, embark on a shared journey of discovery. Their willingness to seek and explore leads them to the Christ child, and they return “a different way.” The stories of the shepherds and wise kings inspire us to approach our synodal journey with open hearts, joyous anticipation, and a readiness to be transformed by the encounter with the divine.

As we transition from Christmas to Epiphany, and still further, let us carry the lessons of the synodal journey embedded in the Christmas narrative into our daily lives. The story of Christmas serves as a methodology for our own journey, reminding us to approach life with faith, openness, and a willingness to explore the depths of divine love. In doing so, we can continue to experience the “good news of great joy” finding serenity and divine peace in the midst of life’s complexities.





# ***LOVE IS THE OIL OF ETERNAL LIGHT***

**Rev Nnam Di Obi**  
England.

Parish priest of Holy Family Church, Swindon and St Joseph Church, Wroughton. He also serves as Judge for Clifton Diocesan Tribunal. Ordained in Clifton Cathedral on the 26th February 2011.



# ALL SOULS DAY

NOVEMBER 2

*"For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

*ROMANS 6:23*



**N**ovember is the month we remember our loved ones who have gone ahead of us to meet the Lord. In our limited human understanding, we often wonder what has happened to them.

It is the time we ask questions about life and after life. Does this life end here? Is the hope of resurrection real? How can we possibly explain it to those who struggle to understand it? Of course, the human understanding of the afterlife will remain limited. But we still have to make a reasonable effort to explain our faith and hope in the life of the world to come.

Of course, our collective or individual perspectives of the afterlife have enormous influence on how we conduct ourselves in the present life. If we think it all ends here, we live like ants and plants that live to die. But if we think there is more to this life, we may be encouraged to live like those who have a purposeful end; they that are not afraid to die because we die to live.

Our faith professes that the life they had with us is changed, not ended. This is why we do not grieve for them like those who have no hope. (Thessalonians 4:13-18)

However, our hope is not a mere wishful thinking on what we have little or no control about. Our Christian hope is rooted in the faith and trust we have in God who has promised us eternal life. Who is God? What is in God that makes anyone believe in him and his promises?

He is the one for whom every soul thirsts and yearns. (Psalm 62) He is the wisdom ever sought by the learned and the clever; revealed to the childlike and humble of heart. He is the mystery surrounding every reality and yet not hiding himself. God as wisdom is bright and does not grow dim. God's wisdom is readily seen by those who love. (Wisdom 6:12-16)

The light of the day will certainly grow dim at the end of the day, ushering in the darkness. That is the reality of our lives. We are born into the first day of our lives on earth, into our own daylight. We enjoy the light of our length of days on earth till we close our eyes in death. At the point of death, it seems our light becomes dim. But for Christians and all who hope in the afterlife, such is a temporary darkness. We transit into the new day; the greatest of lights embraces us in its fulness. The limited light gives way to the unlimited and eternal light.

The children of light are the sons and daughters of wisdom. Their light never grow dim. They are ready to meet the master when he arrives. Love is the oil that lasts till the end of our lives' waiting.

Our earthly life may come to an end, but God's love for us will never end. This, we must remember, forever.





# CHRISTMAS: THE FEAST OF HUMAN DIGNITY



***REV DR CLEMENT VALLUVASSERY***

Faculty Member and Formator at Carmelgiri St. Joseph Pontifical Seminary, Aluva

**C**hristmas is a season of joy, hope and celebration. We thank God for the birth of his Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. God's becoming a human being was not a fancy-dress. On the contrary, He became like us in all things but sin. The Babe of Bethlehem is God made human being. St Irenaeus writes, "The Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, did, through His transcendent Love, become what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He himself is." Christmas is also a season of cribs and carol singing, buying and selling and celebrations of both sacred and secular nature. In the midst of such activities, it is also quite possible that we so easily get side-tracked into a superficial haze about Christmas, bypassing the real message and deep meaning of Christmas. The real poverty of the Child in the manger, for example, has little to do with the picturesque circumstances surrounding his birth. The fact is that his Child is God himself, who lays aside his divinity to take upon himself the condition of humanity.



The creator enters fully into the fragility of his creation. Throughout his life on earth he experiences the vulnerability and precariousness of human life: he was a fragile foetus in the mother's womb, he was scourged, condemned to death, crucified and buried in a tomb.

About God's becoming a human being we read in the Gospel of John: "The Word became flesh" (Jn 1: 14). The Greek expression used here is *sarx* (flesh). The word *sarx* stands for weakness and fragility. A closer look reveals that the novelty of incarnation is not that God became a human being, but He became a fragile and weak human being. In *Gaudium et Spes*, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (Vatican II, December 7, 1965), paragraph 22, we read, "... by incarnation, he, the Son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man." In the genealogy of Jesus presented in the Gospel of Matthew we find, all types of persons in the pedigree of Jesus. There are Jews mentioned; there are gentiles mentioned; there are men mentioned and there are women mentioned; there are saints mentioned and there are sinners mentioned. For example, Rahab was a sinful woman, Ruth was a gentile woman. Referring to persons from different strata of the society, it is revealed that the humanity God assumed into himself in the incarnation excludes none, but embraces all. You are in it and your next-door neighbour is in it.

If God has not hesitated to identify himself with every human being, as it is stated in the document of Vatican II, then we must be able to recognize God's presence in all whom we encounter in our day-to-day life. Christmas is a feast that proclaims the greatness of human being. Jesus Christ, the Word became flesh, reveals not only who God is but also who human being is. That is the reason why Karl Rahner (+ 1984), one of the prominent theologians of the twentieth century, stated that God and the human being are correlative terms. Whenever we speak of God, we speak of the human being directly or indirectly and vice-versa.

Once a Rabbi asked his disciples, "When does the night end and when does the day begin? One of the disciples told after a pause, "When you see an animal in front of you and if you can definitely say, whether it is a goat or a dog, at that moment we can say that the night is ended and the day is begun. The Rabbi was not fully satisfied with the answer. So another disciple said, "At the dawn if you can clearly distinguish a fig tree from a banyan tree, that is the moment of the beginning of the day and the end of the night. The Rabbi was not happy with that answer either. So the disciples requested a proper answer from their master. The Rabbi said, "When you look at the face of your brother or sister and if you recognize God himself in him or her, that is the end of night and the beginning of the day. If you can't that, whatever may be the time, you are in darkness, there is no light in you. Beloved friends, may the Christmas celebration of 2023 be an opportunity for all of us to recognize God's presence in our fellow-brethren.

May the Babe of Bethlehem bless you all abundantly and keep you all healthy in body and mind throughout the New Year!



# MY MEDITATION ON THE JOYFUL MYSTERIES - THE ANNUNCIATION



## ***DEACON BRIN DUNSIRE***

PERMANENT DEACON OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTHAMPTON IN SOUTHERN ENGLAND. EDUCATED AT A YORKSHIRE GRAMMAR SCHOOL AND AT TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE ( 1976-78), HE PRACTISED AS A LAWYER FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS BEFORE RETURNING TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH THROUGH THE EXPERIENCES OF THE STUDENT CROSS EASTER PILGRIMAGE, AND OF CATHOLIC CHARISMATIC RENEWAL IN THE EARLY 90S. CALLED TO SERVE THE LORD AS A DEACON, HE ATTENDED ST. JOHN'S SEMINARY AT WONERSH IN SURREY 2010-12, AND WAS ORDAINED IN JULY 2013. IN SUMMER 2023 HE RETIRED FROM ADMIN WORK WITH THE DIOCESE OF NORTHAMPTON.

**T**his year in the month October, which is the month dedicated to the Holy Rosary, I thought to work on a set of reflections on the twenty Mysteries of the Rosary. These derive from my personal meditations on a rosary walk I do each weekday morning before breakfast. As I have tried to commit them to writing, they have turned into more of a set of in-depth Bible studies. It would be a series of chapters dedicated in each of the quarterly editions of Kadosh Marian Voice starting from the first Joyful mystery—The Annunciation.

## **The Annunciation (Luke 1:26-38)**

*26 In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, 27 to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. 28 And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." [a] 29 But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. 30 The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. 33 He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." 34 Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" [b] 35 The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born [c] will be holy; he will be called Son of God. 36 And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. 37 For nothing will be impossible with God." 38 Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.*

This – not Christmas – is the moment of the Incarnation, the beginning of the implementation within the world of God's eternal plan of salvation. At this moment the divine son, the second person of the Trinity, takes physical form and life within the womb of the Blessed Virgin. Praise be to God ! ALLELUIA ! From this time onwards God is incarnate, God with us, though invisibly, and known only to Mary, Joseph and anyone they chose to tell, such as their parents, if they were still alive.

All that happens at the Nativity, a great Feast as it is, is that the incarnate Word is brought forth and becomes visible to the rest of humanity. It is quite understandable that we regard a baby's birth as the beginning of its life, but this is not quite correct scientifically or theologically. We are all nine months older than our birth certificates would suggest, since human life begins at conception.

So it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the feast of the Annunciation on 25th of March should be celebrated with as much importance and solemnity as Christmas. In old England it used to be called Lady Day, and marked the beginning of the year. Prof. Tolkien, the Catholic author of the Hobbit and the Lord of the Rings, was well aware of this, and included a reference to it in the Lord of the Rings; after the successful completion of the Quest, when the heroic hobbit Frodo Baggins wakes from a long convalescence, the wizard Gandalf says to him "but in Gondor the new year will always now begin upon the 25th of March when Sauron fell, and when you were brought out of the fire to the king". In other words, the day of salvation within that fictional universe. And, indeed, the beginning of the drama of salvation in ours.

There are two more points I would like to bring to your attention. One is the nature of the Virgin Mary's consent. The great American Bishop Fulton Sheen had this to say about the Annunciation :-

"In the Annunciation, the birth of the Son of God in the flesh is made to hinge on the consent of a woman, as the fall of man in the garden of Paradise hinged on the consent of a man.

God in His power might have assumed a human nature by force, as the hand of a man lays hold of a rose. But He willed not to invade His great gift of freedom without a creature's free response. Through the angel who salutes Mary in words that have become the first part of the Hail Mary, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee," Mary is asked if she will give God a man! !"

With utmost respect to the memory of the learned Bishop, Mary was not "asked" anything. She was told, courteously but firmly, what was going to happen to her. The angel does not say "is that all right with you ?" or any such formulation.

It would certainly have been possible for her to say, using her gift of freedom, "Lord, forgive me, but I cannot serve you in this way. I am too young for such matters, and I am intensely worried about how Joseph and his family will take this. They will not understand that this is from You, and it is quite likely they will hand me over to the village elders who will stone me"

Instead she trusts completely in God to sort everything out, and simply says "let all this be done to me as you

have said”. So she does indeed give her free consent, although she was not asked for it as such.

Just prior to this, however, she does have a question for the angel - ““How shall this be, since I have no husband?”” was the version we read out just now, though it is sometimes given as “how shall this be, since I am a virgin ?” . If you think about it, this is an odd question for a betrothed maiden to ask, since she was going to be fully married and have a husband very shortly, and then nothing would be more normal than for them to have a child. God might wish to do something extraordinary with that child, but there should have been no surprise for Mary to be told “you are going to have a baby”. So why was she puzzled about it ?

Some scholars suggest, in line with ancient traditions, that Mary was a lifelong Consecrated Virgin, and had no intention or expectation of having normal marital relations with Joseph and having a child - and that Joseph, being an older man, was quite content with this. (This would harmonize with the notion that the “brothers” of Jesus mentioned in the Gospels were children of Joseph from an earlier marriage.) The original Greek in this episode does not say “I have no husband” or “I am a virgin”. It says “how shall this be, since I know not man ?”

The word “know” in Hebrew usage was often a euphemism for “have sex with”, and when she says “I know not man” it is used in exactly the same way as any of us might say “I do not smoke” -meaning “it is not now, nor in the future, my intention or practice to smoke”. What Mary means is “I am a virgin, and I have vowed to remain so - so unless God is calling me to break my vow, how can it be that I might have a baby ?” . The angel then explains that this is going to be an act of God, not of man.



And so the eternal plan of God for the reversal of the Fall, intended and conceived since the beginning of time (since it is not as if God was caught out or surprised by the sin of Adam and Eve, and had to rethink his plans for humanity) - the plan is implemented in time and space, and the God-Man becomes miraculously incarnate in the womb of a young peasant woman in an obscure corner of the Roman Empire. I like to imagine the angels of heaven waiting with bated breath for Mary’s response – and when she give her assent, so that the plan can go ahead (there was no Plan B, by the way) they leap into a rejoicing airborne dance, spiralling upwards with cries of praise and joy. Glory to God !

### Let us pray

Grant, O Lord, that we may ever be open and attentive to your word spoken to us individually, and to any calling you may put on our lives ; and when we are certain that it comes from You, may we be willing to put aside our own plans and hopes, as Mary did, and be ready to do Your will. In Jesus’ name we ask, Amen.





## THE HUMANENESS OF CHRISTMAS



### Rev Dr Laurence Culas

Vicar, St Mary Parish, Pongummood, Trivandrum  
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**C**hristmas is a warm reminder of God becoming human. It paints in our memories a stunning picture of God being amongst us. “The Word became flesh” (John 1:14) presents an eternal renewal - in every sense of the term - to the people of the world. It’s not quite the continuation of an old experience, but rather, a constant flow of a new one, a flow that never stops. The experience of “God is with us” (Matthew 1:23) doesn’t end with Christmas. Christmas is a surety that “God-with-us” remain with us always, “to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

#### **Christmas brings pneumatic or somatic experience?**

The debate continues as to whether the newness that Christmas brings is spiritual or physical; there are apparent reasons for such ongoing disputes. A human personality is, after all, the point of convergence of soul and body.

Many people hope that this assemblage point is separated through death, uniting the human soul with the Supreme. People constantly nurture this intense desire while they are still alive. This triggers a streamlining of thoughts that places great emphasis on the soul, making human look up to eternal things. As a result, constant efforts to nourish the soul arise from the human side.

Since the soul is stable by nature and the body unstable, human beings must strive tirelessly to guide the soul through the heavenly realms to merge with the Supreme Soul in Paradise, its true and original home. Christmas offers a new spiritual experience: “Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to set us free from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” (Ephesians 1:3-4). It is completely acceptable.

However, in the process of God becoming “Emmanuel” (Matthew 1:23), the physical element is also significant. In the natural thinking of human being, God’s assumed human form does not easily qualify to be worshipped. A distant God better captures his imagination as one deserving of all worship. A God who became flesh and took on human form to dwell amongst us does not exactly garner acceptance.

Therefore, people today look to worship an awe-inspiring and fearsome God enthroned on high. A God to be worshipped only on very special prayer occasions, evoked by candlelight and incense smoke, is the God experience what the people are looking for. People attempt to bring a glorious God down to the earthly places of worship by raising noises to the skies, willing to spend huge amounts of money for the same.

### **Physical element of Christmas is equally important**

But through Christmas, defying everyone’s efforts to bring Him down, God empties his throne and comes in as the salt of the earth upon which human beings stand: “Jesus Christ, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Philippians 2:6).

Therefore, the physical element that occurs through Christmas should not be forgotten. When all distinctions between heaven and earth are blurred, merging soil and skies as one, we can conclude that the desires of the human beings are also important. Pope Francis’ actions and teachings delve deeper into day-to-day-affairs. Therefore he says, “An evangelizing community gets involved in the word and deed in the people’s daily lives; it bridges distances, it is willing to abase itself if necessary, and it embraces human life, touching the suffering flesh of Christ in others” (Evangelii Gaudium 24). When food and shelter are basic human needs, their fulfilment becomes the new message of Christmas.

During the flood disaster in 2018, faced by Kerala State, every one silently proclaimed that the need of the hour was to sustain human life, rendering all high castles of spirituality invalid. In the face of danger and disaster, when ordinary fishermen selflessly plunged into action to save lives, not fearing for theirs, they became the tangible examples of man becoming God. Therefore, when God becomes man through Christmas, man must also step up to become God for others in the daily sufferings of life.

African American poet Howard Thurman’s poem about Christmas presents an experience tender like snow:

*When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and the princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among people,  
To make music in the heart.*

Real Christmas is experienced when people on earth truly respond to their fellow travellers in the language of the poet.







# LOVED, FREED AND SAVED



**Fr. Pious Mallier Bellian**

Indianapolis, USA

(The author is a PhD Candidate at Indiana University School of Social Work and a Sacramental Minister at St. Joseph Church, Archdiocese of Indianapolis, USA).



For to us a Child is born, to us a  
Son is given; and the government  
shall be upon his shoulder,  
and His name shall be called  
*Wonderful Counselor,*  
**Mighty God,**  
**EVERLASTING FATHER,**  
*Prince of Peace.*  
—Isaiah 9:6 ESV

**W**e are on the threshold of Christmas, the most magnificent love story ever written! “**God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life**” (John 3:16). God’s love story to humanity continues when there is meaningful engagement, and authentic relationship between God and us occur by way of being loved, set free, and saved. He wants to reign over our hearts. The spiritual celebration of Christmas cannot ignore the preparation of our hearts by the Sacrament of Reconciliation and acts of charity. We welcome the infant Jesus into our hearts through various means, including celebrating the Holy Mass, preparing mangers at the Church and homes, decorating them with lights and colors, and giving gifts to friends and family members.

We ought to have Jesus among us in a world led by speed, where human desires gain momentum. Jesus, our Savior, was not born in the brightness of the day but rather on a quiet night. God is a big admirer of silence. Even the silence becomes a beautiful revelation. Millions of restless souls awaited this light, whose dawn brought a fresh start. “**People who walked in darkness have seen a great light**” (Isaiah 9:1). The miraculous pregnancies and holy excitement of Mary and Elizabeth are the best examples of the divine intervention in their lives. Their meeting and conversations prove their commitment to God’s will, which is infused in the treasury and tradition of their faith life. Being a believer entails acknowledging and fulfilling God’s commandments and their implications. Mary, ‘full of grace,’ is a perfect model that we can imitate to drive out our weaknesses and limitations and open doors of new possibilities and perspectives by receiving grace and light from our Lord.

The sin of disobedience arose when Adam and Eve refused to obey God when tempted by the devil. The relationship between God and our first parents severed as a result. Further, the covenantal relationship where He will be their only God and they will become His special people reminds us of the status of becoming a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). As a people set apart for divine purposes, the love story of God to the

**Obedience** is the outward evidence of the true fear of the Lord.

John Bevere

1 Samuel 15:22

humanity continues even amidst all challenges and successes His abiding presence evidenced through a cloud and a consuming fire. **“Now, if you obey me completely and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured possession among all peoples, though all the earth is mine”** (Exodus 19:5). Thus, the history of salvation continued through various judges, kings, prophets, and leaders of the people of Israel amidst all events of disobediences of the people and punishments from God, because **“to obey is to better than sacrifice”** (1 Sam. 15:22). To be delivered entirely from the clutches of sinful inclinations and worldly passions, we ought to become His disciples by obeying his commandments.

At the birth of Jesus, when Mary and Joseph could not find a room in the inn, we confronted another sin: the sin of the indifference of the people or inhabitants in Bethlehem. Not letting Mary have a dignified delivery raises a crucial question about the prevalent unjust structure at that time. We have not made much progress today as there are challenges regarding identity, race, unity, and privileges. Pope Francis rightly stated: *“A little bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just.”* To be delivered entirely from the chains of bondage, we ought to know the truth of JESUS and be set free: **“If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free”** (John 8:31-32).

Herod, the murderer, continues his mission of killing the innocents... later beheading John the Baptist during his birthday party and letting Jesus tortured and crucified as a public criminal. Moreover, today, we become Herod when we support or engage in killing innocents, embracing a culture of death in terms of mistakenly affirming our choices and rights. If we consider human life as sacred and inviolable, we will strongly resist any violence and murders and promote a sustainable culture of life.

Jesus is the one who delivered us from the presence, power, and consequence of sin. God would make himself divine and share

his divinity with Jesus by taking on our human form and state. What was broken once would now be fixed by shedding his precious blood to redeem us. We can reconcile in peace and shatter the shell of unforgiveness that covers our hearts through this peace, the pattern God wants to trace on the fabric of our lives. Let us capture miracles every day because they continue to occur everywhere and open the doors of our hearts to receive the light and the grace to embrace His Divine Love to be loved, freed, and saved.





**REV HENRY AVEMARIA** (PH.D)

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL PILGRIMAGE CENTRE OF THE SHRINE OF MARY  
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**A**dvent Season is a very special time of year that sometimes gets lost in the bright lights of the Christmas season it precedes. The first day of Advent begins a four week period of preparation for the nativity of Jesus Christ at Christmas. The Advent Season is all about reflecting on how we can prepare our hearts and homes for Christ's birth in the world as it is today. It is a time for faith communities and families to remember through prayer, reflections, special music, and good deeds what the true meaning of Jesus' birth is.

The Advent season invites us to step away from what can be a frenzied time of parties, shopping, and holiday noise to consider how we commemorate the birth of Jesus, one of the holiest times in Christian faith. It is also a time to reflect on the triumphant return of Jesus at the second coming. We Wait with Hope and Long for Christ's Return

Each year during Advent, we celebrate Christ's birth and anticipate His return.

It is reflective to not the music:

*"O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here,  
Until the Son of God appear."*

The lyrics of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel" serve a dual purpose, aptly applying both to Israel's hope for Christ's first coming and also our hope as we await His second coming. As we remember Christ's birth this Advent season, we long for His return. We celebrate the new life in Christ we have, yet we still hope for a place with no more grief, no more pain, no more death. Through the promise of salvation, this hope will be fulfilled at His return (Rev. 21:4: He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; grief, crying, and pain will be no more, because the previous things have passed away).

## CONCLUSION

We can't celebrate His first coming this Advent season without also being ready to celebrate His second coming above all else. We rejoice because God is with us, indwelling us with His Holy Spirit and fully knowing us as His children. Yet we "eagerly wait" (Phil. 3:20) for the day when the Light of the world will come to eradicate darkness and fully reveal the glory of God to us "face to face" according to St. Paul's writing in 1 Cor. 13:12: For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, as I am fully known.

Nonetheless, Advent is not only a time of celebrating and rejoicing in the present with our brothers and

sisters in Christ, but it's also a time to share the gospel hope with those who don't yet know His redeeming love personally. The purpose of His birth, death, and resurrection is so that all who believe in Him can be saved before His return to earth as King, when perfect justice and judgment will be enacted (John 3:16; Matt. 25:31-46).

However, the reality of the goodness found in walking with Emmanuel's guiding light and wisdom leads to a desire to share this good news with all people — so that each can say with profound hope and faith, "O come, O come, Emmanuel!" Let this be our priority for this Christmas 2023; by touching the lives of people, putting a smile on the faces of the people around us. Dearly beloved, I hope we can all see that we are living in momentous times. Jesus is coming soon! Every year that goes by takes us closer and closer to 'that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' (Titus 2:13).

While this news ought to excite all of us, it does present a matter of concern: Are we ready for the Lord's coming? What should we be doing now if we know that Christ may come soon? Some of the best guidelines for living in anticipation of Christ's coming can be found in the parables that Jesus told on this subject, particularly the 4 parables that are found in Matthew 24 and 25 - the parable of the Goodman of the House, the parable of the wise and evil servants, the parable of the ten virgins and the parable of the talents.

If you had been here for our anniversary Praise night last month, you would have heard a message on the second parable. This morning we will look at the third parable, the one that is called the Parable of the ten virgins. Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.' This parable has an interesting setting, one which is familiar to most of us: the setting of a wedding.

The Unique Setting of the Parable of the Ten Virgins.

The ten virgins were actually participants in the wedding but five virgins were wise with their lanterns and oil and they were ready to enter into the wedding hall to participate at the wedding feast. In the same vein, we must prepare for the advent to enable us welcome Jesus Christ when He comes again on the feast of His Nativity.

ARE YOU READY FOR THE SEASON ?





# MEMOIRS OF A SNOW STORM



**Irene (Sheela) Daniel**  
Toronto, Canada

I have seen snow in movies, videos and pictures and used to admire the beauty of snow. Snow was always mesmerizing for those, like myself, who was born and raised in Kerala and lived in Singapore for few years after my marriage. My very first experience of the cold weather, was the day that we migrated and landed in Toronto Pearson International Airport years ago. As the Air Canada flight was landing in Toronto Pearson International Airport, the beautiful sight of falling snow flakes from the grey sky welcomed me and my family. It was an amazing and beautiful view, which reminded me of “Manna falling from heaven” for the Israelites. As we were entering our friend’s car in the Parking lot, the fall-

ing snow on my face and body gave me chills that penetrated through my flesh and bones. “O God”, I took a deep sigh at the thought of spending the rest of our lives in this country with snow and cold weather.

As years passed by, we encountered extreme winter seasons and snowfall that extends from November to March. The chills and intense cold became part of our lives. New experiences with snow along with our knowledge on different snow related weather conditions also multiplied.

“Winter storm,” brings a mix of snow, freezing rain and ice pellets which pierces through your bones and can give a burning sensation in your face, hands and legs. “Snowstorms” are storms where large quantities of snow fall.

“Gound Blizzard” is a severe snowstorm where loose snow or ice on the ground is lifted and blown by strong winds of 40 km/hour or greater and causes reduced visibility.

“Black ice” is a thin coating of highly transparent ice. It can be hard to see because it blends in with the pavement. Most of the time, it is invisible to drivers or people walking on it and there is a risk of slippage and accidents.

“Whiteout” is a situation that occur when heavy snow, including strong winds, combine to create what almost looks like a “wall” of snow, making it difficult to distinguish objects or the horizon.

A “snow squall” is a sudden, moderate-to-heavy snowfall with blowing snow and potentially gusty winds. Some days the temperature has gone down to -37 and snow accumulation to more than 25 cm. It is astonishing to see how we adjusted to these different weather conditions.

Today, as I go through the memory lane, the fearful 2013 snow squall comes to my mind. Since it was Christmas season, the spirit of the season was in the air, with decorated Christmas trees and lights, Christmas music blasting and crowded shopping malls. Celebrations and parties brought the whole city to a festive mood. We were hosting a Christmas Party in my house that day with my friends. Friends that I made after coming to Toronto, who has become more than family members with each passing year. Even though it was snowing the whole day, all of them arrived for the party. As per our group tradition, we started with singing Christmas Carols, followed by competitions of games, variety entertainments etc... Finally, our special Christmas potluck dinner with dishes prepared by each family. While our celebration was going on, we lost track of time and realized it was almost midnight and to our utter shock saw that the “snowfall” had moved on to “snow storm” and the roads were covered with ice.

Even though our friends knew that their return trip to their homes will be a nightmare, all of them left that night itself. The roads were filled with ice. The speciality of this place is that even in worst weather conditions, City trucks would come and plow the roads. Clearing the drive ways are the responsibility of the home owners. Weather forecast was telecasted continuously through TV, radio and social media. The affected areas were faced with varying conditions, including extreme snow, an ice storm, and a tornado outbreak. The scenes of destruction could be seen all around. Numerous accidents with Vehicles that have been slided in snow, injured people along with deaths. Because of the weight of the ice, trees started to droop onto vehicles, roads, and anything beneath them. The ice also caused branches of all sizes to break and explosions of transformers causing blackout in many places. The ice and snow also took out power lines, leaving over a million residents without power. Without electricity, furnaces in the houses wouldn't





work, causing a chain reaction to no heat, no hot water to drink or bathe and freezing temperatures inside the houses. Since majority of the houses use electric stoves for cooking, people were not able even to cook. We were fortunate to lose electricity just for few hours,

People who were using gas stoves did not have any problem cooking food and those who had gas fire Places got the heat from it and they did not have to freeze inside the house. A good percentage of people were suffering without heat and electricity. Most of the areas received electricity within the next two days, yet some places received electricity after five to six days. The city also set up warming centers to support those who were affected by the storm.

Most people who were affected by the power outage went to stay with their friends or relatives where electricity was available. The others stayed in their freezing houses or apartments. Some churches could not even have Christmas mass due to the power outage.

On Christmas day, I had the opportunity to visit four families who were my friends in their apartments. They were freezing and in dark. It was a pitiful sight and my heart broke seeing them wearing Winter Coats, hats, gloves and sitting under the blanket inside the room. I can never forget their radiating smiles and the glitter in their eyes as I visited each of those families.

Each and every Christmas my memory wanders back to that Christmas day of 2013 recalling those precious smiles.

Electricity was restored in all parts of Toronto two days after Christmas. The thought of that snow storm being the worst one that Toronto has experienced brings to my mind the verse from the Book of Job **“Have you entered the storehouses of the snow, or have you seen the storehouses of the hail”** (Job 38: 22)







# CELEBRATING CHRISTMAS IN A MATERIALISTIC WORLD

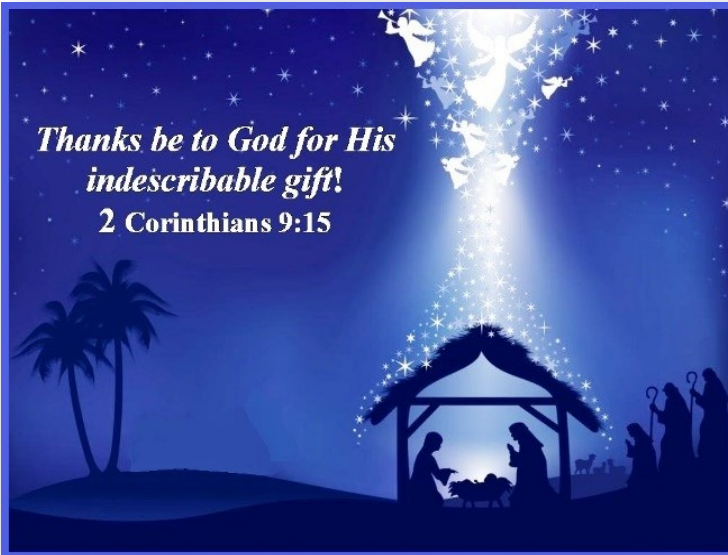


**Rajani Joseph**  
Bahrain

**R**ediscovering the True Spirit of the Season In a world driven by consumerism and materialism, the celebration of Christmas often takes on a commercialized facade. Glittering storefronts beckon shoppers with promises of the perfect gift, and the true essence of the season can easily become obscured by the hustle and bustle of holiday preparations. As Catholics, it is crucial to reflect on the spiritual significance of Christmas and find ways to celebrate amidst the materialistic clamor.

The heart of Christmas lies in the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's love and grace. However, the modern world often emphasizes the exchange of material gifts over the gift of spiritual renewal. It is essential for Catholics to navigate this materialistic landscape and rediscover the true spirit of Christmas.

### The True Gift: Christ's Presence in Our Lives



At the core of the Christmas message is the profound idea that God chose to enter our world in the humble form of a child. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem signifies God's intimate connection with humanity, a divine expression of love and redemption. In a materialistic world, where the value of possessions is elevated, reflecting on the true gift of Christmas becomes a powerful act of faith.

As Catholics, we are called to focus on the presence of Christ in our lives rather than the accumulation of material wealth. This shift in perspective invites a deeper spiritual connection and encourages a more meaningful celebration of the season. By placing Christ at the center, the material trappings of Christmas become secondary to the joy of His presence in our hearts.

### Cultivating a Spirit of Generosity



While gift-giving is a cherished Christmas tradition, the motivation behind it often becomes entangled with consumerism. In a materialistic world, the pressure to find the perfect gift can overshadow the joy of giving. As Catholics, we are called to cultivate a spirit of generosity that transcends material possessions.

Consider redirecting the focus of gift-giving towards acts of kindness, love, and service. Volunteer at a local charity, donate to those in need, or simply spend quality time with loved ones. By shifting the emphasis from material gifts to the gift of self, we mirror the selflessness exemplified by the birth of Christ.

### Simplicity in Celebration



The extravagant displays and elaborate decorations that adorn homes and public spaces during the holiday season can contribute to the materialistic frenzy. Embracing simplicity in our Christmas celebrations can be a counter-cultural and deeply spiritual act. This doesn't mean abandoning traditions but reevaluating them with a focus on their spiritual significance.

Consider incorporating prayer, reflection, and moments of silence into your Christmas festivities. Attend a midnight Mass, create a sacred space in your home for prayer, or engage in meaningful conversations about the true meaning of Christmas with family.

ly and friends. By simplifying the outward expressions of celebration, we create room for a richer, more contemplative experience of the season.

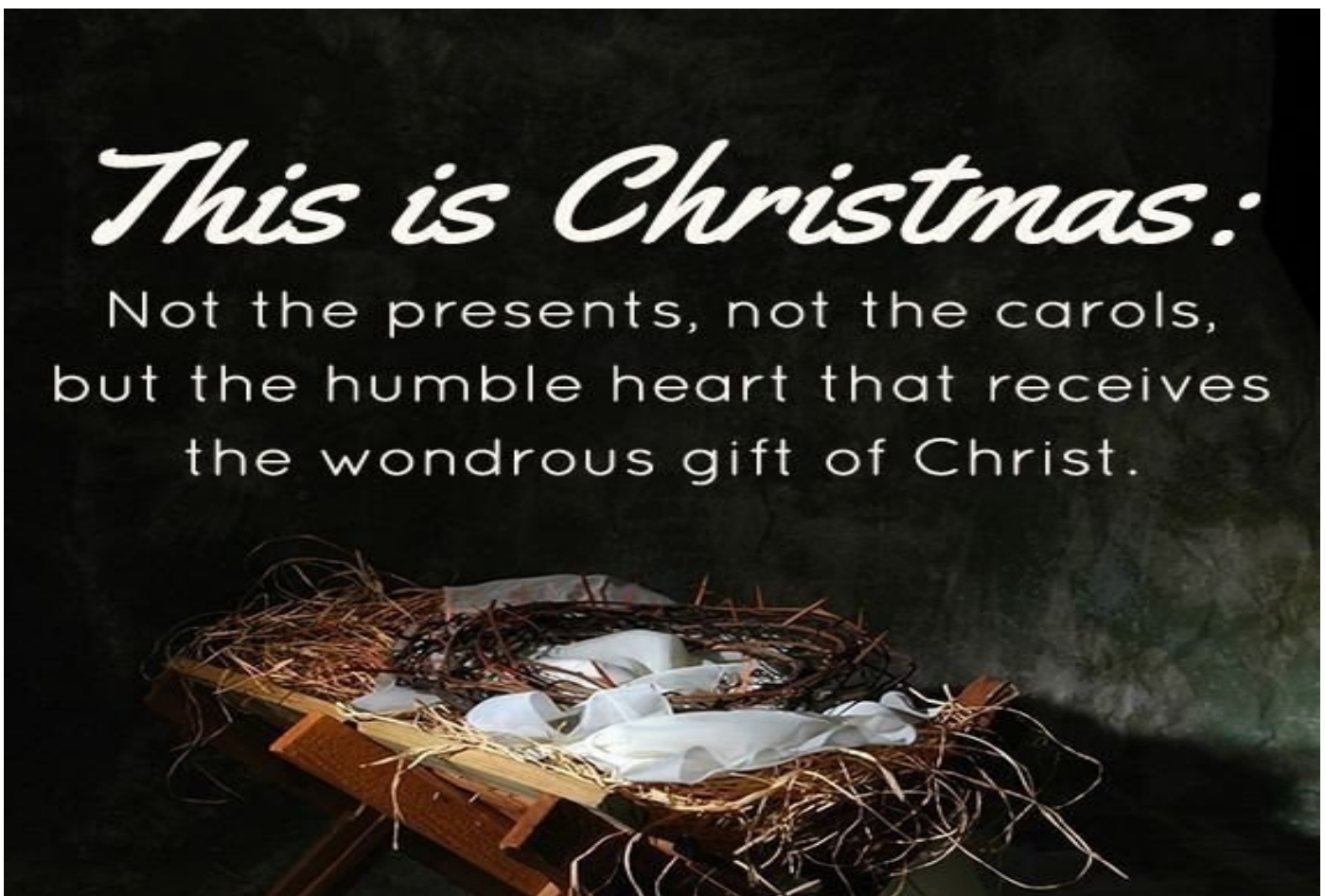
### **The Importance of Advent Preparation**

The season of Advent provides Catholics with a valuable opportunity to prepare spiritually for the celebration of Christ's birth. Amidst the materialistic noise, embracing the traditions of Advent – lighting candles, engaging in daily reflections, and participating in acts of penance – allows us to enter into the true spirit of anticipation and longing for the Messiah.

Use the Advent season as a time to examine your priorities and refocus on the values that define your faith. Consider incorporating Advent rituals into your family traditions, fostering a sense of unity and purpose as you prepare to welcome the Christ child into your hearts.

### **Faith in Action: Evangelizing the True Meaning of Christmas**

In a materialistic world, the celebration of Christmas offers Catholics a unique opportunity for evangelization. By embodying the true spirit of the season, we become living testimonies to the transformative power of faith. Share the story of Christ's birth, not just through words, but through your actions and the way you choose to celebrate.



Engage in acts of kindness, extend a hand to those in need, and radiate the joy and peace that come from a genuine connection with the divine. In doing so, you become a beacon of light in a world often overshadowed by the glitter of materialism.

Celebrating Christmas in a materialistic world challenges Catholics to reevaluate their priorities and refocus on the sacred essence of the season. By centering our celebrations on the birth of Christ, cultivating a spirit of generosity, embracing simplicity, and actively participating in the season of Advent, we can reclaim the true spirit of Christmas.


In doing so, we transform our celebrations from mere rituals into profound expressions of faith and love. As Catholics, let us strive to make Christmas a time of spiritual renewal, deepening our connection with Christ and sharing the true meaning of the season with the world. In this way, we contribute to the ongoing story of Christmas – a story of hope, love, and the enduring presence of God in our lives.





# SEEKING THE KINGDOM OF JESUS AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS:

## UNLOCKING ABUNDANT BLESSINGS



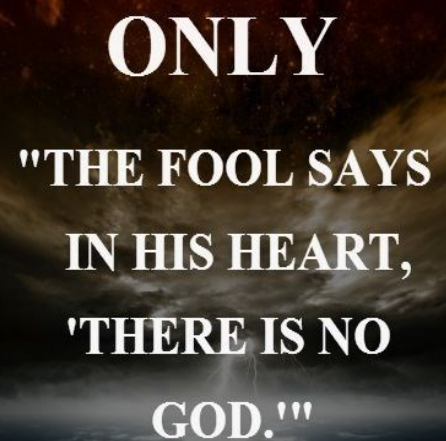
Rani Thomas  
Abu Dhabi, UAE

### Introduction:

In the teachings of Jesus Christ, seeking the Kingdom of God and His righteousness is emphasized as the key to experiencing abundant blessings in our lives. This pursuit involves aligning our hearts, minds, and actions with the teachings and principles of Jesus, ultimately leading to a life of fulfilment, purpose, and divine favour. In this article, we will explore the significance of seeking the Kingdom of Jesus and His righteousness, and how it can transform our lives into a constant state of blessing.

### 1. Understanding the Kingdom of Jesus:

The Kingdom of Jesus refers to His sovereign rule and reign over all creation. It is a realm where Jesus governs with love, righteousness, and justice. Jesus' teachings indicate that this Kingdom is not confined to a physical location but is **within the hearts of**



**ONLY**  
**"THE FOOL SAYS**  
**IN HIS HEART,**  
**'THERE IS NO**  
**GOD.'"**

**PSALM 14:1**

**believers.** When we seek His Kingdom, we acknowledge His authority and surrender ourselves to His divine will.

## 2. Pursuing Righteousness:

Seeking the righteousness of Jesus involves living according to God's moral and ethical standards. Jesus emphasized the importance of cultivating a heart that prioritizes righteousness, both in our actions and in our thoughts. This requires turning away from sin, pursuing holiness, and imitating the character of Christ. As we align our lives with His righteousness, we become vessels through which God's blessings can flow.

## 3. The Blessings of Seeking the Kingdom:

**a. Spiritual blessings:** Seeking the Kingdom of Jesus opens the door to spiritual growth, deeper intimacy with God, and a transformed life. It leads to forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration of our relationship with God, resulting in peace, joy, and a sense of purpose.

**b. Provision and abundance:** Jesus assured His followers that if they seek God's Kingdom first, their needs would be met. This does not guarantee a life free from challenges, but it means that God will provide for His children's essential needs—physical, emotional, and spiritual—according to His wisdom and timing.

**c. Divine guidance:** Seeking the Kingdom of Jesus enables us to walk in His light and receive divine guidance for our lives. The Holy Spirit empowers and leads us, granting wisdom, discernment, and direction in making decisions that align with God's will. This guidance ensures we navigate life's challenges with confidence and clarity.

**d. Favor and influence:** When we seek the Kingdom of Jesus, we position ourselves to receive His favor and experience His transformative power. This favor can manifest in various ways, such as open doors of opportunity, influential relationships, and impacting the lives of others for good. As we reflect the righteousness of Christ, we become salt and light, positively influencing the world around us.

## 4. Practical Steps to Seek the Kingdom of Jesus:

**a. Study and meditate on the Word of God:** Regularly engage with the Scriptures, allowing them to shape your thoughts, beliefs, and actions. Seek to understand Jesus' teachings and apply them to your daily life.

**b. Cultivate a vibrant prayer life:** Develop a consistent habit of prayer, seeking God's guidance, wisdom, and strength. Dedicate time to commune with Him, expressing gratitude, surrendering your desires, and aligning your heart with His.

**c. Engage in Christian community:** Surround yourself with fellow believers who share your commitment to seeking the Kingdom of Jesus. Participate in a local church, small group, or Bible study to grow together and support one another on this journey.

**d. Serve others:** Emulate Jesus' servant-heartedness by actively serving others. Look for opportunities to show love, kindness, and compassion to those in need, both within and outside the Christian community.

**e. Live with integrity:** Strive to live a life of integrity, aligning your actions with the teachings of Jesus. Let your words and deeds reflect His righteousness, demonstrating Christ's love to the world.

## Conclusion:

Seeking the Kingdom of Jesus and His righteousness is a lifelong pursuit that brings immeasurable blessings and transforms every aspect of our lives. As we prioritize His Kingdom, align our hearts with His righteousness, and live according to His teachings, we position ourselves to experience the abundant blessings, He promises. May we wholeheartedly seek the Kingdom of Jesus, allowing His love and righteousness to guide us on this remarkable journey of faith.





# ORDINARY & EXTRAORDINARY MAGISTERIUM



**Rev Ben Boss C C**

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**T**eaching is one of the prominent purposes and missions of the Church. The Church's duty and right to preach the Gospel as the Lord has entrusted the deposit of faith so that with the help of the Holy Spirit it might protect the revealed truth reverently and announce the good news to all the peoples. The deposit of faith are, all the things contained in the Word of God, written or handed on, which all the faithful must believe with divine and Catholic faith. As the supreme pastor and teacher of all the faithful, the Supreme Pontiff possesses infallibility in his teaching by virtue of his office, proclaims by definitive act that a doctrine of faith or morals to be held. It is an essay by which an attempt is made to comment on the Ordinary and Extraordinary Magisterium in the light of Lumen Gentium 25 and Professio Fidei with the help of course on 'Magistero e valore giuridico dogmatico dei documenti'.

## Perspectives of LG 25

Besides the Roman Pontiff, the college of bishops possesses infallibility in teaching when the bishops gathered together in an ecumenical council exercise the magisterium as teachers and judges of faith and morals. They declare for the universal Church, that is to be held definitively and preserving the bond of communion among themselves and with the successor of Peter. They are teaching authentically together with the Roman Pontiff in matters of faith or morals, they agree that a particular proposition is to be held definitively (LG 25). It is very important to underline that «no doctrine is understood as defined infallibly unless this manifestly evident. The teachings proposed definitively by the magisterium of the Church concerning the doctrine of faith and morals is required to safeguard reverently and to expound faithfully. It is to be firmly embraced and retained. The ‘definitely proposed’ doctrines are those solemnly defined by the pope or by an ecumenical council or taught infallibly by the ordinary and universal magisterium as teachings to be definitively held (Cf. LG 25).

In matters of faith and morals, the bishops speak in the name of Christ and the faithful are to accept their teaching and adhere to it with a religious assent. This religious submission of mind and will must be shown in a special way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he is not speaking *ex cathedra*; that is, it must be shown in such a way that his supreme magisterium is acknowledged with reverence, the judgements made by him are sincerely adhere to, according to his manifest mind and will. His mind and will in the matter may be known either from the character of the documents, from his frequent repetition of the same doctrine, or from his manner of speaking (LG 25).

It is vividly verified when gathered together in an ecumenical council, they are teachers and judges of faith and morals for the universal Church and those definitions must be adhered to with the submission of faith (Cf. LG 25).

## Insights of Professio Fidei

Then the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith issued the formula for the Profession of Faith in which we find three propositions after the Apostles creed. The first one is the Tradition and proposed by the Church whether by way of solemn judgment or in the ordinary and universal Magisterium. Secondly the Church proposed definitively with regard to teaching concerning faith or morals. Finally, it is the religious submission of will and intellect to the teachings even if they are not definitive. The first proposition comprises the doctrines, which are ‘contained in the word of God, written or handed down, and defined with a solemn judge-

ment as divinely revealed truths either by the Roman pontiff when he speaks *ex cathedra* or by the college of bishops gathered in council, or infallibly proposed for belief by the ordinary and universal Magisterium’. These doctrines require the assent of theological faith by all members of the faithful and whoever obstinately places them in doubt or denies them falls under the censure of heresy (Cann.750; 751).

In short, the first proposition denotes to the nature of the assent owed to the truths set forth by the Church as divinely revealed and the second proposition points to the assent of faith, to be held definitively. But both are in irrevocable character of assent and owed to the teachings of the Church. The difference concerns the supernatural virtue of faith, formerly is the assent that is based directly on faith in the authority of the word of God the other is the assent based on faith in the Holy Spirit’s assistance to the Magisterium and on the Catholic doctrine of the infallibility of the Magisterium. (Cf. *Professio Fidei* N.8).

## The Magisterium of the Church

In the modern Catholic teaching the term ‘Magisterium’ generally designates the hierarchical teachers- the pope and the bishops- who by virtue of their office have authority to teach publicly in the name of Christ and to judge officially what belongs to Christian faith. In the light of *Professio Fidei* the Magisterium of the Church teaches a doctrine to be believed as divinely revealed (first proposition) or to be held definitively (second proposition) with an act which is either defining (i.e., in solemn form) or non-defining (i.e., in ordinary form). In the case of a defining act, a truth is solemnly defined by an *ex cathedra* pronouncement by the Roman Pontiff or by the action of an ecumenical council. In the case of a non-defining act, a doctrine is taught infallibly by the ordinary and universal Magisterium of the bishops dispersed throughout the world who are in communion with the successor of Peter. Such a doctrine can be confirmed or reaffirmed by the Roman Pontiff, even without recourse to a solemn definition, by declaring explicitly that it belongs to the teaching of the ordinary and universal Magisterium as a truth that is divinely revealed or as a truth of Catholic doctrine (Cf. *Professio Fidei* N.9).

The declaration of confirmation or reaffirmation by the Roman Pontiff, which is taught by the ordinary and universal Magisterium is not a new dogmatic definition, but a formal attestation of a truth already possessed and infallibly transmitted by the Church. The third proposition is about the religious submission of will and intellect to the teachings, even if they do not intend to proclaim by definitive act. It is all the teachings on faith and morals, presented as true or at least sure, even if they have not

been defined with a solemn judgement or proposed as definitive by the ordinary and universal Magisterium.

The truths articulated in the first paragraph are directly divinely revealed and contained in the deposit of faith, are set forth by the infallible Magisterium. The second paragraph as divinely revealed either by virtue of logical or historical relationship they are set forth infallibly in a definitive way. So the definitive nature of such statements derives from the Revelation itself. Thus commenting on LG 25, A. Dulles observes that the doctrines that relate to the deposit of the faith are not only those that directly belong to it, but also the doctrines necessary for the integral preservation of that deposit.

### **The Ordinary and the Extraordinary Magisterium**

The question of a distinction between the ordinary and the extraordinary magisterium arises within the broader context of fundamental dogmatic ecclesiology. John Joy enumerates in his detailed analysis on the distinction between the ordinary and the extraordinary magisterium from Joseph Kleutgen to the Second Vatican Council. According to the doctrinal commentary, dogmas belonging to the first paragraph of the concluding formula (*de fide credenda*) and truths of Catholic doctrine belonging to the second paragraph (*de fide tenenda*) may be defined by solemn judgements of popes or ecumenical councils or may be infallibly taught by the ordinary and universal magisterium. And doctrines belonging to the third paragraph are said to be taught by the ordinary magisterium of the pope or the college of bishops. The distinction between the ordinary and the extraordinary magisterium is typically J. Joy schematized as follows:

- I. Catholic Dogma (*de fide credenda*)
  - a. Defined by Extraordinary Magisterium
    - i. By the Pope speaking *ex cathedra*
    - ii. By an Ecumenical Council
  - b. Taught by Ordinary & Universal Magisterium
- II. Definitive Catholic Doctrine (*de fide tenenda*)
  - a. Defined by Extraordinary Magisterium
    - i. By the Pope speaking *ex cathedra*
    - ii. By an Ecumenical Council
  - b. Taught by Ordinary and Universal Magisterium
- III. Authentic Catholic Doctrine
  - a. Taught by Ordinary Magisterium of Pope
  - b. Taught by Ordinary Magisterium of Bishops

The modes of operation of the magisterium

- I. The Subject of the Magisterium
  - a. The Pope – as Supreme head of the universal Church
  - b. The College of bishops
    - i. Gathered in Ecumenical Council
    - ii. Dispersed throughout the world
- II. The object of the Magisterium
  - a. Divinely revealed matters of faith and morals in Scripture or Tradition
  - b. Matters of faith and morals connected to divine revelation
- III. The act of the Magisterium
  - a. Defining (Extraordinary Magisterium)
  - b. Teaching (Ordinary Magisterium)

One of the possible distinction the ordinary and the extraordinary magisterium is that it refers essentially to a distinction between the teaching of the Church gathered in council and that of the Church dispersed throughout the world. The exercise of the extraordinary magisterium consists always and only in the definitions of ecumenical councils or of popes speaking *ex cathedra*, while every other form of teaching represents an exercise of the ordinary magisterium. In simple words it is defining doctrine and not-defining doctrine. And only ‘defining acts’ constitute solemn definitions of the extraordinary magisterium. The ordinary (non definitive) magisterium of the pope includes every act of official papal teaching regarding matters of faith or morals that falls short of being an *ex cathedra* definition.

### **Conclusion**

The distinguishing feature of the extraordinary as compared to the ordinary magisterium lies in the explicitness of these judgements: they are visibly and tangibly enshrined in the public documents of the Church. For instance, it will be mentioned that the Pope has approved so and so the document in a specific form etc. The Roman Pontiff fulfills his universal mission with the help of the bodies of the Roman Curia and in particular of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith as regards the doctrine on faith and morals. It follows that the documents of this Congregation expressly approved by the Pope participate in the ordinary magisterium of the successor of Peter (Cf. *Donum veritatis* N. 18).







# Christmas Tree at the Vatican



**Nisha Jacob**  
Swindon, England

**C**hristmas is a magical 21-day affair in Vatican city and well, no Christmas celebration is complete without a Christmas Tree. It should come as no surprise that the Vatican pulls out all the stops for Christmas. Christmas celebrations at the Vatican start on December 9th and ends on January 7th. The unveiling of the Christmas tree at the annual Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony held in St. Peter's Square kicks off the festive season in the Vatican. Even though most of the iconic attractions of Vatican City such as the Vatican Museums are closed on December 25 and 26, the Christmas season draws a large number of visitors. The Vatican Christmas Eve mass is the most-watched Christmas mass in the world and you have to book tickets to attend the mass at least 2 months in advance.



Pope Francis spends time in silent prayer Dec. 3 (2022) in front of a Nativity scene handmade by artisan craftsmen in Guatemala.

Christmas Tree at the Vatican every year is installed in the center of Saint Peter's Square, along with a life-size nativity scene. The Vatican Christmas tree, unveiled on 9 December 2023, is a fine 82 feet tall White Spruce tree. It comes from the Italian Alps region close to the French border. The White Spruce Tree that will adorn the Vatican this year will be decorated, not with traditional ornaments, but with white edelweiss flowers, found in the Alps region and higher altitudes.

## **Brief History of The Christmas Tree Tradition at the Vatican**

Also dubbed the St. Peter's Square Christmas Tree, the Vatican Christmas Tree refers to the tree that is decorated and erected at St. Peter's Square as part of the Christmas celebrations. The tradition of placing a Christmas Tree and the Nativity Scene at the Vatican started in 1982, during the pontification of Pope John Paul II. The first-ever Christmas Tree came from Italy and since then, every year, a tree is donated by a different European country or region. Over the past 40 years, the Vatican has seen many kinds of trees from different parts of Europe. Take a look at where the past Christmas Trees at Vatican have come from.

| YEAR | SPECIES       | HEIGHT                | PLACE OF ORIGIN                               |
|------|---------------|-----------------------|---|
| 2023 | White Spruce  | 25 meters (82 ft.)    | Italian Alps                                  |
| 2022 | White Fir     | 30 meters (98 ft.)    | Rosello, Italy                                |
| 2021 | Picea abies   | 28 meters (92 ft.)    | Andalo, Italy                                 |
| 2020 | Spruce        | 30 meters (98 ft.)    | Kočevje, Slovenia                             |
| 2019 | Spruce        | 26 meters (85 ft.)    | Veneto, Italy                                 |
| 2018 | Spruce        | 23 meters (75 ft.)    | Pordenone, Italy                              |
| 2017 | Spruce        | 21 meters (69 ft.)    | Gołdap, Poland                                |
| 2016 | Spruce        | 25 meters (82 ft.)    | Trento, Italy                                 |
| 2015 | Spruce        | 25 meters (82 ft.)    | Ehenfeld bei Hirschau, Bavaria, Germany       |
| 2014 | Fir           | 25 meters (82 ft.)    | Calabria, Southern Italy                      |
| 2013 | Fir           | 25 meters (82 ft.)    | Waldmünchen, Bavaria, Germany                 |
| 2012 | Silver Fir    | 30 meters (98 ft.)    | Pescopennataro, Italy                         |
| 2011 | Spruce        | 30 meters (98 ft.)    | Zakarpattia Oblast, Ukraine                   |
| 2010 | Spruce        | 33.5 meters (110 ft.) | Bolzano, South Tyrol, northern Italy          |
| 2009 | Norway Spruce | 30 meters (98 ft.)    | Ardennes forests near Spa,, Belgium           |
| 2008 | Norway spruce | 33 meters (108 ft.)   | Municipality of Gutenstein, Austria           |
| 2007 | Fir           | 30 meters (98 ft.)    | Val Badia, in the Dolomites mountains, Italy  |
| 2006 | Fir           | 33.5 meters (110 ft.) | Taverna, Calabria, Italy                      |
| 2005 | Fir           | 33 meters (108 ft.)   | Afiesl, Upper Austria, Austria                |
| 2004 | Fir           | 32.5 meters (107 ft.) | Pinzolo, Trento region, Alps mountains, Italy |
| 2003 | Spruce        | 32 meters (105 ft.)   | Pré-Saint-Didier, Valle D'Aosta, Italy        |
| 2002 | Fir           | 28 meters (92 ft.)    | Gorski kotar, Croatia                         |
| 2001 |               |                       | Transylvania, Romania                         |
| 2000 |               |                       | Carinthia, Austria                            |
| 1999 |               |                       | Moravka, Czech Republic                       |
| 1998 |               |                       | Schwarzwald, Germany                          |
| 1997 |               |                       | Zakopane, Tatra Mountains, Poland             |
| 1996 |               |                       | Kočevje, Slovenia                             |
| 1995 |               |                       | Obertraubling, Regensburg, Germany            |
| 1994 |               |                       | Žilina, Slovakia                              |
| 1993 |               |                       | Graz-Seckau, Styria, Austria                  |
| 1992 |               |                       | South Tyrol, Italy                            |
| 1991 |               |                       | Vorarlberg, Austria                           |
| 1990 |               |                       | Ponte di Legno, Brescia, Italy                |
| 1989 |               |                       | Schärding, Upper Austria, Austria             |
| 1988 |               |                       | Cadore, Italy                                 |
| 1987 |               |                       | Carinthia, Austria                            |
| 1986 |               |                       | Toblach, South Tyrol                          |
| 1985 |               |                       | South Tyrol, Italy                            |
| 1984 |               |                       | Waldmünchen, Bavaria, Germany                 |
| 1983 |               |                       | Tyrol, Austria                                |
| 1982 | Fir           |                       | Alban Hills, Italy                            |



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