

## JOY, PEACE, GLORY

INFORMATIVE BULLETIN OF THE PAPHOS LATIN PARISH

DECEMBER 2018

### Wonderful closeness

Christ's coming into the world marked the beginning of humankind's sanctification and renewal.

Christ willed to become man passing through all the stages of our human existence, namely starting in the Virgin's womb, becoming a baby, an infant, a little child, an adolescent, a youth and, finally, a mature man. This way He imparted a special value to all stages of our life and sanctified them.

Consequently, no human being, whether still in the mother's womb, or a baby, an infant, a child, a youth or a mature man or woman is ever alone!

The very fact that the Son of God has chosen and lived and experienced those stages have given a particular grace to every state of age of every person on earth.



We are not only created in God's image (Gen. 1, 27), but God himself took on our human nature and became incarnate, so that He will be close to us and it will be possible for us to see Him, know Him and love Him.

The time of Christmas declares this wonderful closeness of God to us in the best manner: we read in Saint Luke's Gospel (Lk. 2, 13, 14):

"Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, to the shepherds, praising God and saying:

Glory to God in the highest and peace to men on whom his favour rests".

### In Christ you are no longer aliens, but citizens like us

He came and preached peace to you who were far away and to those who were near. For through him we both have access to the Father by the one Spirit.

You are no longer aliens or foreign visitors: you are citizens like all the saints, and part of God's household.

You are part of a building that has the apostles and prophets for its foundations, and Christ Jesus himself for its main cornerstone.

As every structure is aligned on him, all grow into one holy temple in the Lord; and you too, in him, are being built into a house where God lives, in the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:17-22

### The right to be joyful



The Christmas splendour moves the heart not only of the faithful, but of many people who may belong to different religions and non-Christian cultures.

Despite the festive lights, the colourful decorations and the secularization of the celebration of Christmas we all witness around us, the fact remains that the manger with the Divine Infant radiates an irresistible attraction: The humility of God-made-man, not inside palaces but among the “Poor People of God”, the Virgin-Mother, the silence of the night, the Mother’s embrace, the protective presence of Saint Joseph, the shepherds keeping watch of their flocks, the angels who glorify God...

The period of Advent and of Christmas has become the time par excellence when all and each one of the inhabitants of this planet feel that they have the right to be joyful, to celebrate, to turn towards their family, to see the children differently, not in a conventional way but with admiration for their beauty, their innocence, their trust, their spontaneity...

In short, they feel they have the right to be happy about the truth they might perhaps ignore, namely, that all which has been created is “very good” and man has been created in the image of his Creator.

It is left to us, the faithful, who are not strangers but of the family of God, to place Christ at the centre of the festivities and to explain to all the real reason of the joy which fills our heart.

## Did you know...

When the Fathers of the early Ecumenical Councils bequeathed to us, among other things, the Symbol of Faith, i.e. the "Credo", in its second article we confess:

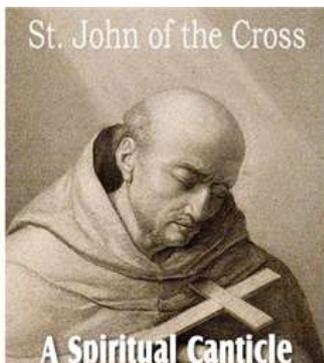
"We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father; God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father. Through him all things were made".

The last phrase "Through him all things were made" makes reference not to the creation of the world, but to its re-creation!

By his Incarnation and his coming into the world, by his teaching and his sacrifice on the cross and his Resurrection Christ has renewed the world; He has re-made it, He has recreated it!

The period of Advent, which precedes Christmas time, reminds us the long and patient expectation of the People of God and of the whole humanity for redemption and salvation; this way it spiritually prepares us to keep the Infant of Bethlehem at the centre of our heart, our life, our family, our parish, our work, our community and our society.

## Beauty and dignity on Christ



The son of God is, in the words of St. Paul, "the brightness of His glory and the figure of His substance." (Heb. 1, 3)

God saw all things only in the face of His Son. This was to give them their natural being, bestowing upon them many graces and natural gifts, making them perfect, as it is written in the book of Genesis: "God saw all the things that He had made: and they were very good." (Gen. 1, 31) To see all things very good was to make them very good in the Word, His Son.

He not only gave them their being and their natural graces when He beheld them, but He also clothed them with beauty in the face of His Son, communicating to them a supernatural being when He made man, and exalted him to the beauty of God, and, by consequence, all creatures in him, because He united Himself to the nature of them all in man.

For this cause the Son of God Himself said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all things to Myself." (John 12, 32) And thus in this exaltation of the incarnation of His Son, and the glory of His resurrection according to the flesh, the Father not only made all things beautiful in part, but also, we may well say, clothed them wholly with beauty and dignity.

Saint John of the Cross, "The Spiritual Canticle", Stanza 5, 4, 16th century.

## **Music on Christmas morning**

MUSIC I love—but never strain  
Could kindle raptures so divine,  
So grief assuage, so conquer pain,  
And rouse this pensive heart of mine—  
As that we hear on Christmas morn,  
Upon the wintry breezes borne.

Though Darkness still her empire keep,  
And hours must pass, ere morning break;  
From troubled dreams, or slumbers deep,

That music kindly bids us wake:  
It calls us, with an angel's voice,  
To wake, and worship, and rejoice;

To greet with joy the glorious morn,  
Which angels welcomed long ago,  
When our redeeming Lord was born,  
To bring the light of Heaven below;  
The Powers of Darkness to dispel,  
And rescue Earth from Death and Hell.

While listening to that sacred strain,  
My raptured spirit soars on high;  
I seem to hear those songs again  
Resounding through the open sky,  
That kindled such divine delight,  
In those who watched their flocks by night.

*By Anne Brontë (1820-1849)*

## The Christian symbolism of the Christmas tree



A lot has been said with regard to the “pagan” origins of the Christmas tree.

Have we, though, thought for a moment, why this “borrowing” has been so successful?

Here is the reason;

The tree symbolizes man, who having his roots on the earth, reaches out to heaven like the tree which is rooted on the ground spreads its branches toward the sky.

In the same way man spreads his thoughts and innermost desires towards God.

And as the Holy Spirit adorns the soul with His gifts and graces, so the tree is decorated with lights and candles etc. to symbolize God’s gifts to us.

Of course, the exchange of gifts is as old a custom as humankind, however, the gifts we exchange over Christmas is a reminder of the great gift of God to us, namely the giving of His own Son, who became also the Son of Man in order to grant us the joy of redemption and salvation.