

COMMUNIO IN CHRISTO

*Our Life -
Our Works*

Digital Spiritual Letter No. 31, December 16th 2024

Theme:

Holy Night (from 1985)

SEAT IN LIFE



This reflection of Mother Marie Therese published in her book “The Passion of Jesus in the year 2000.” is an expression of her deep love for the Church. She recognizes the holiness of the Church being aware of the human fallibility. The texts in the book, started from deep encounters with God and fellow brothers and sisters which is reflect Mother Marie Therese’s compassion and service to those in need.

Particularly touching is her reflection from Christmas 1985. Although it was written 39 years ago, it is of timeless relevance and speaks to us even today, amidst our own challenges and questions.

May she encourage us to recognize the true meaning of Christmas and - as Mother Marie Therese did - to pass on the love of God to all who come into our lives.

Yours

Jaison Thazhathil
Superior General



REFLECTION OF MOTHER MARIE THERESE

HOLY NIGHT 1985

The Grace of God has appeared to save all human beings. It teaches us to renounce the godlessness and earthly desires and to live a prudent, righteous and devout life in this world while we wait for the blessed fulfilment of our hope: for the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Christ Jesus.”

(Tit 2:11-13)

24 December 1985

My dear friends!

These words are better than how life is lived in reality... A few days ago, I came across a sentence that focused on Christmas. „Christmas in export“ was the title chosen by the author. Studying the content more deeply, I realized why the title had attracted my attention. In this chapter Christmas was described as what it has become in almost all European countries: A fairground of illumination, advertising, huge Christmas trees and sumptuous meals. If we travelled to Japan, we would be horrified by all sorts of things that have turned Christmas into a worldly celebration.

We do not find anything spiritual, nor any kind of message, or deeper meaning when we wander through the streets of a big city and find the enormous choice of gifts as if served on a plate. And yet, everyone has been longing for that day, including we Christians. Everyone, whether rich or poor awaits gifts. On the very day we feel that Christmas is somewhat about giving, love and peace. Christmas should not be the consequence of secularization, rather the meaning of Christmas for us should be the light with which Christ reaches the centre of our history.

This child, born to us today, does not represent the commercial gift industry. It is not a toy, not just some illustrative material for little children. This child is not a smiling baby Jesus that came into our world just for pleasure. It wants to point to the presence of God, in our midst. It brings peace and demands from us, too, that we remove all hinderance and let go of feelings of hatred, of jealousy, and torment. This child brings the Word of God to life, it speaks to us and takes back nothing of what it holds against us. This child is a warning for those who find no meaning in Christmas and use it to believe in God for just a few moments.



This child wants to help us where we need His grace, where we cannot find it elsewhere because the world with its own rules has moved far away from the endless love. This child speaks to the sick and comforts them where others fail. This child wants to be at the side of the desperate, so that the light of hope will reach their hearts and the faith in God will prevail again in our world. This child whom we are so close today wishes to make His home with us forever. He wants to leave the cold manger; He wants to dwell in us and bring light where there is darkness.

This child wants to turn to the poor and help and bring joy to them. Begging and full of longing He stands at the door

of our hearts and influences our emotional world, so that we, too, will be freed from our selfishness.

God wishes to find man, and man must find God again. Here in the manger lies God in the flesh as one of us. Here we are to stop and let the light take effect on us. His light is love; his light is peace.

This family that out of necessity ended in a limestone cave, for there was no room for them in the inn, took a manger as a cradle and straw as its bedding.

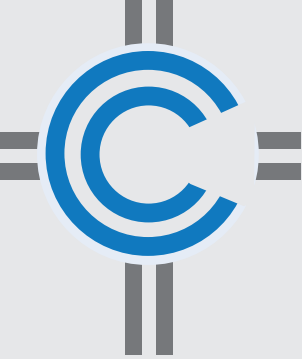
What sets us apart from the child are the expectations of Christmas. This child makes no demands, He renounces explicitly all luxury, all security. And although nothing would be in the way of love, if we had a pleasant party afterwards, love would be severely damaged, if Christmas were the celebration of selfishness. Everywhere on earth people are starving and everywhere people are suffering.

The meaning of Christmas is love, the action to which this child calls us. If we wish to celebrate Christmas in His spirit, we will also be forced by Him to set out in order to receive from Him the power to believe in this child and to live the way He does. The inexorable consequence with which Jesus was born, is the fact that He became a brother to us, giving up all necessary human forms of life, taking sin into himself and atoning for it out of love for us.

His message thus becomes a duty. It leads Christmas to the light of understanding. The grace of God has appeared to save all people.



Almighty Word,
being part of eternity,
You descended from heaven
from the royal throne of glory,
and join the ranks of humanity.
Burdened with shame, exposed to the cold,
yet compelled for the sake of love,
to show the world your whole nature.
The word was born and became man, equal to him.
And this child, to whom praise is due today,
suffers torment, and this out of love.
He loves and gives all He has
so totally immeasurably ... and probably out of grace
with our bad nature.
Longing for God's honour He descended,
to bring new life to what was corrupted by pride,
and shines in divine majesty,
like the sun upon the earth.
Enchanted with love He looks at us.
He, who just exchanged His kingdom for such poverty
and how happy He is that He can love,
so humanly warm,
so boundlessly and without pausing
can pour Himself into our souls,
because He is love itself, so endlessly wide,
so endlessly high, so kind-hearted, equal to goodness.
O night so strange, in which the word became man,
the word that is Father,
when love makes it life,
when a human heart receives and also realizes:
God, my God, here in the manger,



I bring You my gift,
for you gave me Your kingdom, which is wider than this earth.
You give me Your eternity,
heaven – and that forever.
In deep calm and great tenderness
I heard the truth in my soul.
Love is the measure by which God is fathomed.
My amazement at Your greatness must not leave me,
for the word is mine,
that has adapted itself to me,
that leads me to the measure of all things,
to the love that is like you,
so that what is gained by grace
leads others to knowledge,
and my God may receive praise from all
for the precious gift of His love.
But where the heart is so full of egoism,
and does not open for the other
there is no place for Christmas either.
Oh, my beloved ones, why don't you say right here,
oh, baby Jesus, how I love you,
so deeply, with a wide horizon,
oh, grant my request soon
and give this world Your grace,
so that it may find its way home to love,
of which this night bears witness!
Peace be with you!
Amen.



COMMENTARY

By Reverend Father Jonas Seke

This reflection is based on Titus 2:11-13. After reading Mother's reflection on Christmas, 1985, I have come to realize the greatness of the mystery of incarnation. In fact, the mystery of incarnation affirms that, in Jesus Christ the divine Word made flesh. The proof of this truth of faith is found in the first chapter of John: «In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God» (Jn1:1).



In the mystery of the Incarnation, God becomes one of us. Through this mystery, God shows us a path of interiority where God is within us and present in the most intimate part of our soul. The mystery of the Incarnation points out a personal relationship with God. In that relationship, we pass from exteriority to interiority for it is a filial and Trinitarian relationship from Father to Son in the Spirit. Saint Augustine of Hippo expressed it in this famous saying: «God became man so that man might become God».



Moreover, we must recognise the mystery of two natures intimately united two wills (human and divine), both united without separation and without the slightest confusion. That is the mystery. We profess it in our Nicene Constantinopolitan Creed 'True God and true man'.

God never ceases to be born in us and in the world. He makes us participants in his work of love. Indeed, our God is LOVE. This is clearly stipulated in Saint John's Gospel: «God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life» (Jn 3:16). Only love can bridge the distance! Only love is powerful enough, strong enough to overcome all obstacles to bring joy and light to all people; to give peace and the mercy of God to mankind; and finally, to express love in action to all.

Christmas is truly the revelation of God's infinite love. At Christmas, God wants to make us as overflowing with love as he is. He wants us too to be able to cross distances.

Merry Christmas!!!!

Fr. Jonas Seke

Reverend Father Jonas Seke, Benin



Fr. Jonas Seke is a priest in the diocese of Natitingou in the Republic of Benin. On 5 January 2013 he was ordained a Catholic priest in the Cathedral Saint Sauveur of Natitingou by His Excellency Mgr. Pascal N'Koue, the current Archbishop of Parakou. He is staying in the Seminary Notre Dame of Fatima at Parakou as formator and lecturer. He teaches English and Philosophy. He got to know the Communio in Christo through Father Igor Kassah, a student in Rome at that time, who had spoken to him about the Communio.



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