



CHRISTMAS 2018

A CLOSER LOOK

Journeying with Josefa Segovia

CHRISTMAS, Midnight Mass, December 25, 2018

*, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim
to you good news of great joy"*

LUKE 2:1-14

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now, there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear.

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger."

And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

JOSEFA SEGOVIA

“Peace to those of good will”, repeat the angels at the birth of the divine Child. Is there peace in our consciences? Are we at peace with our brothers and sisters? Can we feel within our hearts the gift of peace announced to the shepherds...? Let us pray, as the Pope has asked, for peace for all peoples. But, let us secure first our own, for only in peace can the delicious intimate and gracious joys of Bethlehem be enjoyed.

Only through humility can one reach a humble Jesus, and humility cannot be reached other than through humiliation. Will we reject humiliation during these days when we try to live in the spirit of the manger? The way to the stable is dark; the entrance, narrow; the size small; the Baby, tiny; Mary and Joseph, very humble. Nothing taking space fits there.

Prayer

We welcome you with love, Prince of Peace. We listen with hope to the words of the prophet: “The Lord will make peace... everything will be at peace” (Isaiah 2: 9,11) You are our peace, the peace that can transform life and history. This Christmas, bring peace to each of us, bring peace to our families, bring peace to our countries. Help us to believe that in you and with you peace is fruitful. It moves always forward, nobody can stop it. If the Father has sent you to make peace with us, our lives also want to build in the world paths of peace and bridges of hope. Place upon our hearts the peace we seek and that only You can give. Make us instruments of your peace. Amen.

Blessing

* Thank you, father, for the gift of Jesus, our Emmanuel, and the Word made flesh. Thank you for this night of peace, for this night of love, which you have given us by giving us your Son.

* May your blessing and grace accompany us, merciful Father, so that, by announcing with joy the birth of Jesus, our brother and our savior, your grace may transform us into a blessing for others at this time of Christmas and throughout our lives.

* Jesus, as we gather in your presence celebrating the great day of your birth, we ask you to bless our gathering and to give us a generous heart so that we may share the bread, the joy and the faith with those who need it most.

* May your blessing reach all the children of the world so that they may grow up, like you, in age, wisdom and grace. That no one may lack the food, the serenity, the love and the protection that helps him or her to be happy.

* May your blessing and grace accompany those who are lonely or suffering today due to abandonment or violence. May the mystery of your Incarnation, which today we announce with joy, be light, company and nourishment for all humanity, now and always.

FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY OF JESUS, MARY AND JOSEPH, December 30, 2018

Joseph, in naming Jesus was the very first person who spoke his name. We, in our silence and in our words, learn from Joseph a way of relating, communicating, and of being family.

LUKE 2: 41-52

Each year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the feast of Passover, and when he was twelve years old, they went up according to festival custom. After they had completed its days, as they were returning, the boy Jesus remained behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Thinking that he was in the caravan, they journeyed for a day and looked for him among their relatives and acquaintances, but not finding him, they returned to Jerusalem to look for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions, and all who heard him were astounded at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him, they were astonished, and his mother said to him, "Son, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have been looking for you with great anxiety."

And he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" But they did not understand what he said to them. He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and favor before God and man.

JOSEFA SEGOVIA

Mary's life at Nazareth must be a constant example. In the service of Jesus, constantly attentive to His voice, following in His footsteps, guessing His wishes, showering Him with delicate care, working by His side, sleeping under His roof, praying with Him and fulfilling His loving will. With Mary and with Joseph let us seek Jesus without rest. Where shall we find Him? We find Him in the faithful fulfillment of the loving will of God. Where that will is obeyed, there Jesus is.

When Jesus abandoned his parents and they thought He was lost, Our Lady quieted down her pain seeing Joseph overcome by the same feeling, because the union of those who suffer bring relief and mutual comfort. (...) He searches for Jesus with unequalled diligence and solicitude. He suffers his own pain in silence and consoles Mary. He considers himself unworthy; he humbles himself, and once the Child is found, leaves it up to his chaste spouse to inquire about His absence. Bitter pain that of our saint, teaching us to search for Jesus without rest, to suffer with peace and to accept trials in silence. (...)

... As Abraham, Joseph was a man of faith and obedience... as Jacob, a man of patience... as Joseph of Egypt, a pure man... as David, a man after God's heart... and as Solomon, a man of wisdom. Therefore, this shall be our model and protector...

For Reflection

- * How vividly do we live our lives? Is the blur of the fast-paced to-do list of activities overwhelming that it undercuts the necessary pauses of our day, i.e. meals and conversations with family, prayer time, sleep and relaxation?
- * What about the loss of meaning, zeal, understanding, trust, peace.... and many more? Have you ever given them a thought? What are you striving to find that you may have lost? In our deliberate following of Christ, how often do our actions witness to the zeal that consumes us for God's Kingdom?
- * What can we do to help those whom God has sent our way, in their pursuit of being found, of being seen and of being loved?

Prayer

Lord, make us notice the times when the quiet absence of Christ in our lives becomes the new normal or the unconscious reality. May we be always aware of your enduring presence within us and should our paths take an unexpected turn, we pray for the determined perseverance to re-trace our steps back to find you again, and in the process be a companion for our brothers and sisters who seek, thirst and hunger for you, and for the Truth that you are. Amen.

**SOLEMNITY OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY,
THE MOTHER OF GOD, The octave day of Christmas
January 1, 2019**

*It is not ourselves that we announce when
we do good works, but the Good News
of the one who is coming to us.*

NUMBERS 6: 22-27

The LORD said to Moses: "Speak to Aaron and his sons and tell them:
This is how you shall bless the Israelites.
Say to them: The LORD blesses you and keeps you!
The LORD let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you!
The LORD looks upon you kindly and give you peace!
So shall they invoke my name upon the Israelites, and I will bless them."

JOSEFA SEGOVIA

We begin the year in the loving embrace of God... New year, new life! New and growing fervor; new and growing diligence; new and growing sacrifice; new and growing love and charity towards God and our neighbor. New life of sacrifice, of self-denial, of abandonment in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Beginning the year under the light of the Star... means facing the Truth, securing the Way and enjoying the joys of Life. Among all offerings, the one most pleasing to God is our own.

Prayer

Lord, you make all things new.

As we begin this New Year under the light of the Star, we thank you for all the benefits you have granted to us in this year that ends. May your light enlighten us and give us strength so that throughout our lives we can feel your presence as a friend, brother and companion.

As we begin this New Year under the light of the Star, we join our voices to give you praise, to You who are Way, Truth and Life. Glory to God in the heavens and peace on earth! The joy that your presence communicates to us sustains us now and will always sustain us in our struggles. The certainty of your infinite love helps us start the New Year with a renewed heart. We praise you Lord and we bless you!

As we begin this New Year under the light of the Star, we confess our faith and ask you to strengthen and increase it. Thus our eyes will know how to discover and recognize you in the movements of history, in the new time that you offer us, in each and every day of this coming year. So we, women and men who wish to make your Kingdom present, will be able to live reconciled, to reflect your kindness, to love without exclusions, in deed and in truth, in solidarity and justice, and to cooperate with you in each new birth that your love will make possible. With firm confidence we ask this to you, our God, star and light of our lives. Amen.

Blessing

(Inspired by Evangelii Gaudium of Pope Francis, #286, 287, 288)

- * We implore today the blessing of Mary, who was able to transform a cave of animals into the home of Jesus, with poor swaddling clothes and a mountain of tenderness.
- * We ask for the blessing of Mary who, as Mother of God and our Mother, is a sign of hope for the peoples who are suffering birth pangs waiting for justice.
- * We ask for the blessing of Mary, who walks with us, struggles with us and pours incessantly the closeness of God's love.
- * We ask for the blessing of Mary, who allowed herself to be led by the Spirit, in a journey of faith, towards a destiny of service and fruitfulness. Today we fix our eyes on her so that she may help us announce the message of salvation to everyone.
- * We ask for the blessing of Mary so that the Church may be a home for many, a mother for all peoples, making possible the birth of a new world.
- * Virgin and Mother Mary, you who moved by the Spirit, welcomed the Word of life in the depth of your humble faith, totally surrendered to the Eternal One, help us to say our "yes" now as it is more urgent than ever, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus.
- * You, filled with joy, sang the wonders of the Lord. Grant us now a new fervor of resurrection witnesses to bring to everyone the Gospel of life that overcomes death.
- * Give us the holy audacity to seek new ways so that the gift of beauty that never fades may reach all peoples. Help us to shine in the witnessing of communion, of service, of an ardent and generous faith, of justice and love for the poor, so that the joy of the Gospel may reach the ends of the earth leaving no periphery deprived of its light.
- * Mother of the living Gospel, fountain of joy for the little ones, pray for us. Amen. Alleluia!

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD, January 6, 2019

"And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them"

MATTHEW 2: 1-12

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage." When King Herod heard this, he was greatly troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. Assembling all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, He inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They said to him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it has been written through the prophet: And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler, who is to shepherd my people Israel."

Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.

JOSEFA SEGOVIA

Jesus came to be the light of the world. He started to be light from the moment of his very birth; being light in the light of the star that awakened the Magi, guided them and took them to the manger at Bethlehem.... we can look at the star as the symbol of the Magi's vocation... All of us have our own star. (...) Each soul shines with a light of its own, singular, unique and different.

This light has the most beautiful manifestations...it is as the Magi's star. In other words, it is the star of our vocation. (...) Our vocation carries and brings us; it moves us as hay in the wind, but always following Jesus as a magnet, as the compass and lighthouse of our life. In the midst of family obstacles, youthful impulses, temptations of the ate, the bonfires of vanities of the university or academy, the prestige of a public position, the tendency to a comfortable life, a difficult temperament, the dreams of vanity..., in the midst of all of that *the start shed its light*.

May the divine Child manifest Himself to you through a star; better yet, be Himself the start that lightens you, guides you, warms you up, and marks the proximity or distance from your goal. The proximity that will make you stop and contemplate, the distance that will move you to hurry your steps, carrying out much good. (...)

For Reflection:

- * In which ways throughout my life have I been given the light of the star, in moments of joy and in difficult moments, in moments of peace and in moments of search?
- * What difficulties have I met along the way, or am I meeting right now, to follow the star of my vocation?
- * At which moments have I felt the proximity and at what times the distance?

Prayer

Once and again, Lord, you call us to yourself... both when we seek you and when we are distracted and concerned with so many things, and surrounded by darkness. Your light has guided us and guides us now to your heart and your loving will for our lives. Continue giving us strength and encouragement, Lord, to follow you despite the many difficulties and darkness we encounter. May we, at last, come before you, like the Magi, and present to you the same gifts you have given us. Amen.

BAPTISM OF OUR LORD, January 13, 2019

We are chosen and loved unmistakably by God who in countless ways and in a loud voice declares to all who may hear – that we are loved.

LUKE 3:15-16, 21-22

The people were filled with expectation, and all were asking in their hearts whether John might be the Christ. John answered them all, saying, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. I am not worthy to loosen the thongs of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."

After all the people had been baptized and Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, heaven was opened and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.."

JOSEFA SEGOVIA

How impressive evoking that scene was! (At the River Jordan). I renew my baptismal promises, ask for humility for me and for all, and I rejoice in God's pleasure as He manifests His divine Son, wishing that He will also be pleased in us. (...)

Jesus, meek and humble of heart, we want to imitate you! How? With sacrifice, with humility. With patience, with love... Those who truly love Jesus find nothing difficult, painful or bitter. Love softens everything, facilitates everything, and smooths the way for everything. Fill yourself with love, and you will be rich in self-denial and humility. Do not deceive yourself thinking that you follow the divine Shepherd when, really, you are following your own will. Listen to His loving whistle, look at Him and walk very close to Him. Try not only to imitate, but also to be another Christ, according to St. Paul's teachings. If you *are Christ*, treat Christ *within you* well: in your soul and in your body. You have given all to Him who is all. Let Jesus work in you His work: totally. May your daily gift of self to Jesus be serene, conscious, loving, true and active.

For Reflection* How real is our loving and how sincere our gestures in extending the hand and heart of God to others?

* What is God revealing in my life and am I allowing the Spirit to lead me through the unfolding process of discovering His will?

* When God speaks, how do I listen and in what ways can I echo his words to others who need to hear them favorably, clearly and tenderly?

* How is Christ revealed in the way I care for my family, friends and neighbors?

Prayer

We are a testament of your acceptance and welcome, mercy and blessing, forgiveness and passionate self-giving. Called to be in communion with you as branches of the vine, we know you as our father, shelter, protector and provider. We ask you to forgive us for the times when we are ungrateful because we feel emptiness in the face of abundance, we complain of hunger even after being fed, we see darkness in the presence of light and are disappointed and poor while surrounded by plenty. Teach us the ways of humility and trust in your love and in your word. Amen.

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