



In the Two Hearts

Scattering the Seeds of Hope . . . in Peace and Trust

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Christ Dwells Within: A Christmas Meditation

Christmas is a perfect season to ponder the mystery of Christ dwelling within us. The Blessed Mother can help us to recognize and remember Christ abiding within all of our hearts, considering her experience with Him as He lived physically within her for nine months. How delightful that time must have been for her; the ancient hope of Israel was finally being fulfilled. The Messiah had come to earth! She would have rejoiced exceedingly with that realization. But what a wonder it was that He was not simply somewhere in the world -- He dwelt within her.

Silent Joy

The torrent of praise welling up within Mary found an outlet in her "Magnificat", when she realized that her cousin Elizabeth knew of the Mystery as well. Mostly, it was in silence that she communicated her joy as she dwelt alone with the Lord within. Spouses who have grown old together do not need many words between them; their looks can communicate so much, and they understand one another perfectly. Our Lady had only to look within her to see the Lord of All looking at her, knowing her fully, and exquisitely loving her.

A Bond of Love

The Mother knew of His Love for her, and so she sought to give Him all the love that her heart was capable of. With this love she also sought to make up for all the neglect and irreverence shown to Him Whom she so ardently loved. Truly this was a precious time for her; it was a unique melding of humanity with Divinity. While Jesus dwelt in the womb of Mary, a bond of love was established between Their Hearts that would continue to unite Them for the rest of Their lives, and into Eternity.

Living Tabernacles

The wonderful truth is that this Lord is also present in our hearts, and He wants to establish a bond between our heart and His, just as He did with His Blessed Mother. Through baptism, the Most Holy Trinity comes to abide in us; we become living tabernacles of God. However, it is up to each one of us to decide what kind of a relationship we will have with Our Lord, Who dwells within. We can choose not to pray, not to seek a deep and personal relationship with Him, leaving Him alone in the depths of our heart -- alone with the longing He has for intimacy with each of us, or we can choose to seek the Lord with all our heart, and in seeking, to find Him very close indeed. The choice is ours, and He will always respect our free will. Our Lord does not force us to love Him; in fact He cannot do so, for then it would not truly be love. The mystery of our free will hinges upon that one thing: love.

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O my Mother, teach me the secret of your interior life; teach me to live recollected with God present in my soul. Teach me your silence, communicate to me your spirit of adoration; close to you, in your school, I too wish to be the little temple of the Trinity. Help me to detach myself from creatures and to live in silent, loving adoration of the Trinity in the innermost depths of my soul.

-Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen

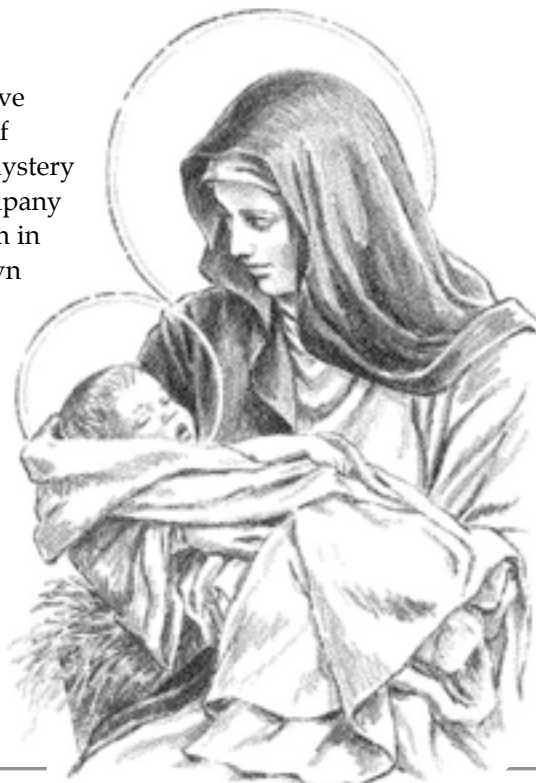
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Love for Love

The Lord yearns for us to freely love Him – to choose to return love for love – but, love cannot be forced. There are many things we can be forced to do, but love is not one of them. Love is one thing that must, and can only, be chosen. As we realize the great mystery of God Himself dwelling within us, the choice becomes more clear: to keep Him company throughout the day, to desire to remember His Presence and consciously include Him in everything, to turn to Him, to entrust all to Him, to adore His will as it is made known to us – or to try to do things on our own, to see situations only through our own eyes, to let ourselves be too preoccupied with daily concerns to be aware of His gaze, to leave Him alone, and feel ourselves alone.

A Deep Intimacy

“The Lord is with you!” The angel said to Mary. He is with us as well – always! He is so close to us, closer than we are to ourselves (as St. Augustine says). We have a constant and generous Friend Who is ever near, so near that He knows the slightest pulse of our heart and hears our faintest whisper. He delights in taking notice of us, for He loves us so. That is why Jesus became a man, to enjoy a deep intimacy with us. The Blessed Mother chose to foster this intimacy during the time Our Lord dwelt in her womb, and continued to do so throughout her life. And you . . . what will you choose?



Remain within your deepest self, in the interior kingdom of your spirit. Remember that your soul is a temple of the living God.

~St. Paul of the Cross

✠ Thank You Jesus ✠

Sometimes the Lord lets us catch glimpses of His answers to prayer, to encourage and enliven our faith. We wanted to share with you a recent “answered prayer” story about a friend we pray for.

A terminally ill religious sister, urged by faith, went on a pilgrimage to shrines and holy places of Italy and Eastern Europe. While in Eastern Europe, she dropped and shattered her glass jar of insulin. Daily dependent upon 60 ml., she unsuccessfully tried to locate a replacement throughout the surrounding countries. Such insulin was unavailable and unheard of. Fearful of potential consequences and unsure of her fate, she went to Mass, abandoning herself to the Lord. When she returned after Mass, filled with His gift of a reassuring peace, the hostess received a call. A bottle of insulin had just been donated to the parish’s free pharmacy: the exact kind and precise amount the sister needed until her return to the United States.

Prayer works. Thanks be to God.

Praying for Africa

The continent of Africa and many of its peoples have been plunged into a darkness this world has never known. With all our hearts we are begging the Lord to send grace to lead these souls back to His light.

The peoples of Africa, dear to the Hearts of Jesus and Mary, have long been known to the citizens of our nation as a people who suffer. Their poverty, famines, droughts, epidemics, corrupt governments, and warring tribes have not been unknown to the world. But today there is an evil that extends beyond the awareness of most Americans and beyond the comprehension of those who do know. Our prayers are primarily concentrated on both the victims and the perpetrators of violence in the Congo and in the Sudan. We would like to give you a brief description of the darkness that is ravaging the hope of such beautiful people, as an invitation for you to join our pleading for peace, protection and salvation for their souls.

Most likely you have heard of the mass genocide in Rwanda in 1994. The Hutu tribe killed over 800,000 Rwandans, mostly Tutsis, while the world watched on and, astoundingly, did little to help. After the violence was quelled, those same Hutus who had instigated the genocide fled west to the forests of the Congo.

The massive brutality that these Hutu men inflicted upon their countrymen produced extensive psychological, moral and

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Our Vocations and the Spiritual Journey - *From a Brother's Point of View*

On September 14 – The Exaltation of the Cross – Br. James of the Holy Spirit made his temporary profession. The picture to the right is during the ceremony and the other was taken afterwards outside the Church with some friends of the Order.

What is a religious brother? I've asked myself this question many times and the only answer I've come up with is that there is no answer, at least not a universal one. Sure, I could give you a text book definition (as can be done with any vocation) but, to be able to explain what a brother *is*, that is something that comes from deep within.

Take for example married life, no two couples live out their marriage in the same way. Yes, it is the same sacramental union and vows that all couples enter into but, how each *live it out* is quite unique. That is because how we as individuals live out our vocation – be it married life, Religious life, Diocesan Priesthood, Consecrated Single Life, or any other vocation or calling – is intimately bound up with our particular spiritual journey, our walk with Our Lord, our communion with Him in the Upper Room of our innermost soul.

The calling is unique for each individual soul and no two souls journeys are alike. When I say "journey" I mean our individual way of relating to Our Lord, our many experiences with Him throughout our life, our particular mission entrusted to us by Our Lord which only we can fulfill, our way of living out the call to holiness in our lives, and authentically, genuinely and honestly reflecting that person He's created us to be in the unique way that He desires for us. This is the unique journey that all are invited to and that radically impacts how we as individuals will live out our vocation. There is no such thing as a "cookie-cutter" saint; if there were, then all the beauty, variety, individuality, and unrepeatability of life and the spiritual journey would be lost. And what a terrible loss that would be.

We must each walk that unique path that Our Lord has cleared for us, personally following His inspirations, His example, and His teachings that He gave, and then live them out in our life in the way that is authentic for us. We have to make His teachings our own and in doing so reflect Him in that particular way which He created us to; to reflect that beautiful and unique hue of color that emanates from the spectrum that is God's Heart. This is the mystery of each vocation and spiritual journey. Although the appearance reveals nothing "special" or "extraordinary" the interior is everything but. May God grant us the grace to empty ourselves of all comparisons, preconceptions, desires, and ideas of holiness and find that particular path He desires us to walk. Amen.



NOTE

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spiritual damage not just to others, but in a most horrific way, to themselves. The aggression previously found in Rwanda consequently spilled over into the Congo and contributed to two wars which have claimed nearly as many victims as World War II.

It is here that a new level of evil has developed that is deeply disturbing and more debilitating than any disease: wide scale rape. The use of rape as a weapon of war is unfortunately not new, but the savagery and epidemic proportions it has accrued are, and they leave one astounded.

The problems in the Sudan (particularly the Darfur area) are markedly similar: another genocide is taking place. The Arab run government has been systematically wiping out the Sudanese Africans through various methods, but mainly by government supported militias, which the natives call the *Janjaweed* ("devil on horseback"). The Janjaweed attack village by village. They rape, burn, and shoot all those they come upon. They then destroy the village so that those who do survive cannot re-establish their lives.

In both the Congo and the Sudan there is a too often repeated scenario. Gangs of young men enter a village, with fire, guns, machetes and anger, with which they wreak havoc and show no mercy. Their aim is total destruction. Those women who are not immediately killed are subject to sadistic multiple rapes. The gangs, insane with malice, will even force husbands, wives or children to watch their evil acts. More recently, even men and children are being subjected to the same terrible violation.

The victims of this crime (if they are not killed in the process) are sometimes kept as slaves for ongoing violations or else left, half dead, to be shunned by society, family, and spouse. Always the victims are tragically effected, and many lose hope in humanity, in themselves, in life and in God. They have experienced violence in a profound way and find no means to rebuild their lives. The loss of family members, no protection from future invasions, the absence of the most basic necessities for life, together with the emotional and psychological trauma of being physically violated have led many to despair.

The causes of these wars and cold-blooded genocides are complex and varied. To attempt to summarize is certainly beyond our capability as well as our intent. We wanted to share with you what has most struck us and how we try to pray for those who are suffering such atrocities or other tragedies that we may learn about. One way that we do so is to try to personalize the situation, that is, to understand what must be going on within the people themselves and try to make it real for ourselves, instead of it being just "another sad story".



Just as one kind word, one thoughtful deed, one smile can change someone forever, so too can one sacrifice, one offering, one relinquishment of our will or preference be used by Our Lord for the salvation of souls.

Consider each person involved, their pain, what it must be like for them or their family members. Consider the isolation, hopelessness and despair of a woman after being a sexual slave for months; or the humiliation of a man after having been raped. Consider the hatred that would naturally well up within a child from witnessing their parent murdered before their eyes. Consider the absolute fear of a young boy who is kidnapped from his home by militiamen and taken to be brain washed and indoctrinated with their "principles." Consider the elderly couple as they hide within their hut in terror as the Janjaweed make their way through the village.

So many have lost hope . . . after what we have learned and the images we have seen, we understand. But God is *never overcome*. Love is so much stronger than evil. And so we do not lose hope. We believe that our Jesus of love and mercy is there with them, in the midst of their sufferings. One heart praying with faith and love in the midst of such chaos and atrocities can annihilate a thousand evils. One soul touched by grace can be a vessel of healing and mercy to those around them like a burning lamp in a dark room. We believe that God's mercy and grace will reach souls in this time of darkness and be the light to lead them to peace. We also look with hope to Our Lady, the Mother of all peoples, and trust that her powerful intercession can obtain the salvation even of those who cause such violence.

And now we pray with ardent pleas to the Father to save our brothers and sisters and for the grace to offer for these souls without reserve. Just as one kind word, one thoughtful deed, one smile can change someone forever, so too can one sacrifice, one offering, one relinquishment of our will or preference be used by Our Lord for the salvation of souls.