

20. December 2020

**“Preparation for Christmas”
Part 1**

During the first three weeks of Advent, we prepared for the coming of the Lord from three different perspectives.

- We have looked at the historical dimension through the biblical texts and the liturgy, which visualises the coming of the Saviour in its liturgy.
- Looking at the birth of Christ in us should help us to perceive the biblical event also in our souls, because the Lord does not only want to be born in Bethlehem, but also to live in our hearts in real life.
- The third week focused on the return of the Lord and should awaken us to use the time to prepare the way for the returning Lord.

For the fullness of a Christian life, these areas belong together and need visualisation. Without the historical reality of redemption, our faith would be a myth; without internalisation, it would have no depth; without the prospect of the Second Coming, it loses its goal orientation and diminishes its dynamic vigour.

So, in order to live an awakened life in the following of Christ, which is nourished by Word and Sacrament, opens up the mystical dimension and is directed towards the goal, we need the special presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He is the living reminder of what Jesus said and did (*cf. Jn 14:26*), he is poured into our hearts (*cf. Rom 5:5*) and never tires of making us aware of the Lord's coming, so that we remain sober, alert and prepared!

Let us now turn our attention to Bethlehem, where Mary and Joseph are on their way:

“Now it happened that at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be made of the whole inhabited world. This census -- the first -- took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to be registered, each to his own town. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee for Judaea, to David's town called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.” (Lk 2:1-5)

At first there was no room in the inn for Mary and Joseph (cf. Lk 2:7c) and they had to make do with a grotto. Perhaps their hearts were a little anxious in view of the crowded inns and the approaching birth. But a grotto offered them refuge. Mary and Joseph will have waited with joy, grateful to have found a place - albeit a humble one - for the birth of the Son of God.

Surely the Virgin will have pondered again and again the words spoken to her by the angel: *“Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.”* (Lk 1:30-33)

St Joseph, whom the Bible calls a “righteous man” (cf. Mt 1:19), must have been amazed at what was happening to the bride entrusted to him and the child she was expecting.

Understanding the ways of God that so transcend our way of thinking is an ongoing process. Spending every hour, every day near their divine Son, who will soon be visible, must have filled their hearts with great joy. The waiting for the birth, all the preparations, every little and small gesture is in service to the Lord. We can now also consciously enter into this waiting.

It is always new, because we can come to know more and more the love of our Saviour. It is the Lord whom we will meet in the Child of Bethlehem, whom we can learn to understand more deeply every day. His love and wisdom is unfathomable (cf. Rom 11:33), to the amazement of the holy angels and for us human beings. Some things are not always understood through words. It is enough to simply look at the child and let ourselves be looked at. Just as a mother looks at her child with rapture.

Let us ask Our Lady and St Joseph for the love with which they waited for Jesus and for the tenderness with which they prepared his coming.