



HUMILITY

Living CHRISTMAS



"Mary rose and departed hurriedly. (Lk 1, 39)

Introduction

The present pastoral year will be marked by the holding of the Lisbon World Youth Days 2023. We will have the privilege of welcoming this great event in which thousands of young people from all over the world, including Vincentians, will participate. The quality of this welcome involves learning from Jesus and Mary the **meekness, humility, simplicity, zeal and mortification**, virtues that well characterize the **Vincentian charism**. Thus, in each liturgical time, until the World Youth Days, we will present a proposal for Reflection and Prayer, on each of these virtues. We continue this journey at **Christmas** time, reflecting on and praying **Humility**.

Be prepared

- P:** Come Holy Spirit,
T: fill the hearts of your faithful
and kindle in them the fire of your love.
P: Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.
T: And You shall renew the face of the earth.

**Humility is the virtue of Jesus Christ,
The virtue of the Virgin Mother,
The virtue of the greatest Saints.**

Saint Vincent de Paul



Christmas time has arrived, the feast where we commemorate the birth of Jesus Christ.

It is an important day for us Christians, because we celebrate that Jesus Christ, the Son of God *"For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and became man."*

Faith in the true Incarnation of the Son of God is the distinctive sign of Christian faith.

The coming of the Son of God to earth is an event so immense that God wanted to prepare for it for centuries. From the prophets of the Old Testament to St John the Baptist, the Lord's immediate precursor (Acts 13:24), sent to prepare the way for him (Mt 3:3).

"The human heart is the best crib of Jesus, the family the necessary school of Christmas and the Christian community the new leaven of the Gospel that the Son of God brought us."

This birth of Jesus reveals God's love for humanity. The recognition of this love should make us more humble, more generous and supportive, more attentive and happy, closer and more brothers and sisters, conscious members of a new humanity and active builders of a living Church.

Pray



Lord Jesus, at this time of Christmas, gives us the grace of smallness. Teach us to love littleness. Help us to understand that this is the road to true greatness".

He makes us live humility, living charity with every brother.

«For a child is born for us, a son is given us.» (Is 11, 5)

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Thus, we suggest reflecting on this Christmas theme, taking into account the virtue of Humility, supported by what is transmitted to us by the Catechism of the Catholic Church and the words of Pope Francis.

He himself, stated that: ""without humility" (Christians) will never find God because the person who lacks humility "has no horizons before him, he has only a mirror" and looks at himself".

May this dynamic, whether done individually or in groups, lead us to live more actively the joy of the Message of Christmas in concrete acts of love towards all those who walk with us.

Reflecting on the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Listen and host |

§422. «But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, **born of a woman**, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that **we might receive adoption as sons** (Gl 4,4-5) This is «the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God: **God has visited his people. He has fulfilled the promise he made to Abraham and his descendants. He acted far beyond all expectation - he has sent his own beloved Son»**

§423. We believe and confess that Jesus of Nazareth, born a Jew of a daughter of Israel at Bethlehem at the time of King Herod the Great and the emperor Caesar Augustus, a carpenter by trade, who died crucified in Jerusalem under the procurator Pontius Pilate during the reign of the emperor Tiberius, is the eternal Son of God made man. «He 'came from God» (Jo 13, 3), « descended from heaven» (Jo 3, 13; 6, 33) and «came in the flesh», **For the Word became flesh and dwelt among us**, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father...and from his fullness have we all received, grace upon grace» (Jo 1, 14, 16).

§525 **Jesus was born in a humble stable, into a poor family;** Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event. **In this poverty heaven's glory was made manifest.** The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night: The Virgin today brings into the world the Eternal/ and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible. / The angels and shepherds praise him/ and the magi advance with the star. / For you are born for us, Little Child, God eternal!

§526 **To become a child in relation to God is the condition for entering the kingdom; For this, we must humble ourselves and become little.**; Even more: to become "children of God" we must be "born from above" or "born of God". Only when Christ is formed in us will the mystery of Christmas be fulfilled in us. Christmas is the mystery of this "marvellous exchange": O marvellous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of the Virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity.

Question yourself and Rise up |

- ☞ "God has visited his people"... Do I too go to the meeting/visit and make the poorest brother feel like a "much-loved son"?
- ☞ "We believe and confess"... Do I feel joy in announcing this faith of ours or do I live it in an individual way, afraid to transmit it to the world?
- ☞ "Jesus was born in humility"... What does this manifestation of poverty and humility want to teach us?
- ☞ "Born of God"... How does this mystery of Christmas "take shape" in my way of acting/celebrating?



Reflecting with Pope Francis

Listen and host |

1. "Above all else, this is what Christmas bids us to do: **give glory to God, for he is good, he is faithful, he is merciful.** Today I voice my hope that everyone will come to know the true face of God, the Father who has given us Jesus. My hope is that everyone will feel God's closeness, live in his presence, love him and adore him" (Message Urbi et Orbi 2013)
2. "The precious gift of Christmas is peace, and **Christ is our true peace.** And Christ knocks at our hearts to grant us peace, peace of the soul. Let us open our doors to Christ!" (Angelus, 21/12/2014)
3. "The Child Jesus. **My thoughts turn to all those children** today who are killed and ill-treated, be they infants killed in the womb, deprived of that generous love of their parents and then buried in the egoism of a culture that does not love life; be they children displaced due to war and persecution, abused and taken advantage of before our very eyes and our complicit silence. I think also of those infants massacred in bomb attacks, also those where the Son of God was born. Even today, their impotent silence cries out under the sword of so many Herods. On their blood stands the shadow of contemporary Herods. **Truly there are so many tears this Christmas, together with the tears of the Infant Jesus**" (Message Urbi et Orbi 2014)
4. "If we take the Child in our arms and allow ourselves **to be embraced by Him,** He will give us the peace of heart that will never end." (Homily at Christmas 2015)
5. The Gospel emphasizes this contrast. It relates the birth of Jesus beginning with Caesar Augustus, who orders the census of the whole world: **it presents the first Emperor in all his grandeur.** Yet immediately thereafter it brings us to Bethlehem, where there is no grandeur at all: just a poor child wrapped in swaddling clothes, with shepherds standing by. **That is where God is, in littleness.** This is the message: **God does not rise up in grandeur, but lowers himself into littleness.** Littleness is the path that he chose to draw near to us, to touch our hearts, to save us and to bring us back to what really matters. (Homily for Christmas 2021)
6. This is the challenge of Christmas: God reveals himself, but men and women fail to understand. He makes himself little in the eyes of the world, while we continue to seek grandeur in the eyes of the world, perhaps even in his name.. **God lowers himself and we try to become great. The Most High goes in search of shepherds,** the unseen in our midst, and we look for visibility; we want to be seen. Jesus is born in order to serve, and we spend a lifetime pursuing success. **God does not seek power and might; he asks for tender love and interior littleness.** (Homily for Christmas 2021)
7. To accept littleness means something else too. It means **embracing Jesus in the little ones of today.** Loving him, that is, in the least of our brothers and sisters. **Serving him in the poor,** those most like Jesus who was born in poverty. It is in them that he wants to be honored. On this night of love, may we have only one fear: that of offending God's love, hurting him by despising the poor with our indifference? Jesus loves them dearly, and one day they will welcome us to heaven. (Homily for Christmas 2021)
8. Brothers and sisters I tell you: there is so much suffering in Ukraine, so much! And I would like to draw some attention to the coming Christmas, even to the festivities. It's nice to celebrate Christmas and have parties... **but let's lower the level of Christmas spending a bit** - that's how you say. **Let's make a more humble Christmas, with more humble gifts, and let's send what we save to the people of Ukraine who need it,** hey suffer so much, they are hungry, they are cold and many die because there are no doctors, no nurses available. Let us not forget: a Christmas in peace with the Lord but with the Ukrainians in our hearts and let us make that concrete gesture for them ".
I invite you all to **intensify your spiritual preparation for Christmas** which is now at hand". (General Audience – 14/12/2022)



Question yourself and Rise up |

- ☞ “God’s closeness”... Can I feel His presence in my life? Do I give space to love and adore him?
- ☞ “Christ is our true peace”... Have I made good use of the time of Advent to pacify my heart? Do I open the doors to welcome the child God who comes to guide our history?
- ☞ “My thoughts turn to all those children”... Do I give the necessary attention to the children around me, allowing them to be happier knowing that they are loved by God?
- ☞ “Embraced by Him”... Do I find in the Crib and in the Liturgy this attitude of a God who wants to embrace us?
- ☞ “In *littleness*”... How can I understand the littleness? Do I lower myself to the level of the other so that he feels greater?
- ☞ “The Most High goes in search of shepherds”... Can I be humble in my pastoral work? Or do I try to stand out, appear and be recognised?
- ☞ “Serving him in the poor”... I find Christ in the poor? Can I recognise his face, loving the poor as if he were Christ himself?
- ☞ “Let's make a more humble Christmas”... Am I willing to accept Pope Francis' proposal, reducing Christmas expenses and sharing with those who are most in need?
- ☞ “I am neither from here nor there, I am from wherever God wants me to be”... How does this sentence of Saint Vincent de Paul make sense with the "Christmas message"?

Prayer for every day:

Pray



*Lord Jesus, you who willed to become poor,
give us eyes and a heart directed toward the poor
help us to recognize you in them;
in their thirst, their hunger, their loneliness, and their misfortune.*

*Enkindle within our Vincentian Family
unity, simplicity, humility,
and the fire of love
that burned in St. Vincent de Paul.*

*Strengthen us, so that, faithful to the practice of these virtues,
we may contemplate you and serve you in the person of the poor
and may one day be united with you and them in your Kingdom.*

*** HOLY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR ***

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