



Homily Notes

November 1, 2015: All Saints Day

I. Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14 II. 1 John 3:1-3 III. Matthew 5:1-12

Praising the Saints

Why is it necessary to celebrate the feast of all saints? All year round we are celebrating feasts of saints: Thomas Aquinas, January 28; Augustine of Hippo, August 28; Theresa of Lisieux, October 1, etc. Why then is it necessary to set apart a day to celebrate the feast of all saints? I can think of two important reasons.

1. Beside the handful of saints whose feast days we celebrate on specific days in the year, there are countless other saints and martyrs, men, women and children united with God in the heavenly glory whom we do not celebrate. Many of these would be our own parents and grand-parents who were heroic women and men of faith. Today we keep their honourable memory. In many ways, therefore, today's feast can be called the feast of the Unknown Saint, in line with the tradition of the Unknown Soldier. We celebrate what the first reading calls **“a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands”** (Rev 7:9).

2. This celebration gives us a peek into our eternal destiny. The saints we celebrate were men and women like us. Where we are now they used to be, and where they are now we hope to be someday. As Christians we know that a person's life story is not limited to what happens to them between the day they are born and the day they die. Our story starts before we are born, at our conception, and goes beyond the day we die, to all eternity. That is why we do not simply forget people after they die. Didn't St Theresa of Lisieux say that she would spend eternity doing good on earth? In our mortal eyes

she is dead and gone. But in the eyes of faith we know that she is alive now more than ever, because she is now fully alive in God. She is now more alive than we are because the life she now enjoys can no longer be diminished by suffering, disease and sin, or death.

Unfortunately, our reaching the fullness of life with the saints does not happen automatically. **“Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven”** (Matthew 7:21). How do we live a life of doing the will of our heavenly Father? The answer is given us in today's gospel, the Beatitudes, where Jesus gives his followers a road map to a happy eternity. All the saints we celebrate today walked the hard and narrow path of the Beatitudes to arrive at heavenly bliss. On the feast of All Saints the church invites us and challenges us to walk the walk, not just to talk the talk, of the saints.

The Beatitudes propose to us a way of life, inviting us to identify with the poor, those who mourn, the meek, and those who hunger and thirst after justice. They challenge us to be compassionate people, to be men and women who are pure in heart, and to become the peacemakers in our dealings with one another, in our families and in the society at large, even when this approach to things exposes us to ridicule and persecution. None of the saints we celebrate today had it as their aim in life to amass wealth, to acquire power or to gain popularity. Rather they looked forward to the eternal reward which God gives to his faithful ones at the end of this short earthly life of illusion.

Today we are invited to walk the path of the saints, the way of the Beatitudes. The way is narrow and hard. We need faith and courage to walk it. The example of the saints and their prayers encourage us and help us on. St Augustine found it hard to live the Beatitudes, but when he read the lives of the saints he said, “What these ordinary women and men have done, why not me?” Why not? Faith assures us all who heed the call of Jesus and live the life of the Beatitudes that at the end of life we shall, together with all the saints, hear the consoling words of the Lord, “Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joys of your master” (Matthew 25:21). --**Munachi Ezeogu, cssp** (From internet)

November 8, 2015: XXXII Sunday in Ordinary Times

I. I Kings 17:10-16

II. Hebrews 9:24-28 III. Mark 12:38-44

The Widow's Plight

Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa is very fond of this joke: When the missionaries came to Africa, we had the land and they had the Bible. Then they said, "Let us pray," and asked us to close our eyes. By the time the prayer was over, they now had the land and we had the Bible. And he usually ends the joke by adding, "And I think we got the better deal." In this joke we have a substantiation of Karl Marx's criticism of the Christianity of his day as the "opiate of the people," – that which puts people to sleep while the ground under their feet is taken away from them. In today's gospel Jesus warns his followers against religious leaders who propagate this kind of anaesthetic religiosity. **"Beware of the scribes, who ... devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation"** (Mark 12:38-40). In the second half of the gospel reading, the story of the widow's mite, we see a tragic example of the product of this kind of religiosity. Jesus commends the victim but condemns the victimiser.

Last week we read about the scribe who asked Jesus about the first of the commandments. In the end Jesus gave him his word of encouragement and commendation: **"You are not far from the kingdom of God"** (v.34). Soon after that, in today's reading, Jesus warns his followers against the scribes who were going to receive a great condemnation. What is the crucial difference between the Good Scribe who was commended last week and the generality of scribes who are condemned this week. The Good Scribe earned Jesus' approval when he agreed with Jesus that practical love of God and neighbour **"is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices"** (v.33). In other words, the generality of the scribes believed in "Temple before people" but the Good Scribe, by listening to Jesus, was able to arrive at the Gospel position of "people before Temple." This is the position of those on the way to the kingdom of God. The needs of flesh-and-blood women and men come before the need to maintain the sacrificial routine of the Temple.

Traditionally we have read the widow's mite story as a story about boundless generosity and self-sacrifice. But we should first read it in the context in which Mark wrote it, as a tragic evidence of the religious exploitation for which Jesus condemned the Temple religious establishment. Before reading the story as a model to encourage generosity to organised religion we need to read it first as a condemnation of the use of religion to

exploit simple, suffering and powerless humanity. Jesus is teaching in the Temple. He has just condemned the unscrupulous scribes who devour widows' property under the pretext of religious fervour. Then he looks over and sees this widow putting **"everything she had, her whole living"** into the treasury and he points to her and says, "See what I mean?" The scribes never literally robbed widows' houses. But by their teaching they exploited widows by persuading them in their privation to give up even the very little they had.

It's like what happened at the World's Fair in San Francisco in 1939. One of the attractions was a pile of money said to total \$1,000,000. For 25 cents, visitors were allowed to touch the money. Poor people spent their last quarter to have a momentary brush with affluence. But did that make them any richer? No, only 25 cents poorer? False ideas nourishing false hopes can rob the poor even of the little they have.

Jesus commends the exploited widow. Why? Does Jesus approve of the process that has reduced her to the state of indigence? No. Jesus praises her for her sincere and total trust in God, not for the sorry fact that the religious establishment was taking advantage of it. In the final analysis, in the kingdom of God, between the victimiser and the victimised, it is always the victimised who gets the better deal, as Desmond Tutu rightly remarked.

In the male-dominated society of New Testament Palestine, the widow would symbolise all who have no voice, no means and no power. Who would such people be today? Do we as individuals and as a church reach out to such people to help them improve their lot. Or do we only tell them to pray harder and everything would be all right, knowing quite well that it takes more than prayer to revive their fortunes? Is Christianity a powerless gospel that opiates the people and maintains the status quo or is it the good news that liberates and transforms personal and social life? -- **Munachi Ezeogu, cssp** (From internet)

November 15, 2015: XXIII Sunday in Ordinary Times

I. Daniel 12:1-3 II. Hebrews 10:11-14,18 III. Mark 13:24-32

The Good News of the Last Days

But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. (Mark 13:24-25)

In the month of July, 1999, Pope John Paul II shocked the Christian world when he made these statements in his Wednesday audience: “Heaven, or the happiness in which we will find ourselves, is neither an abstraction nor a physical place in the clouds, but a personal relation [with God]. ... This final condition can be anticipated in a certain sense now on earth.... Moreover, the pictures of Hell given to us in Sacred Scripture must be correctly interpreted. They express the total frustration and emptiness of a life without God. More than a place, Hell is the state of the one who freely and finally removes himself from God, the source of life and joy.”

Why did the Pope deem it necessary to offer this kind of clarification at this time? I think that the Pope was responding to two popular but erroneous ways of looking at biblical texts that have to do with the End Times, namely, rationalism and literalism. We shall illustrate by looking at today’s gospel reading on the End Times from the rationalistic and literalistic points of view, and then we shall point out what the passage can say to us when we read it as the Good News that it is supposed to be.

A rationalistic approach will read this passage as the mistaken belief of early Christians that the End Times were just around the corner. But it was a mistake, pure and simple, and that is all we can learn from it. Their associated beliefs that heaven was a physical place in the clouds, and that from there Christ would come back, that stars would fall from the sky, even though we now know that one star is indeed bigger than planet earth, and the belief that earth was a four-cornered flat surface, have all been proven to be wrong by advances in modern science. Conclusion: this is an outdated text that has no value to us, and heaven is nothing but a figment of their primitive imaginations.

A literal reading, on the other hand, would treat our passage as a factual prediction of future events that will mark the End Times. If the Bible says heaven is somewhere in the clouds, then heaven is somewhere in the clouds. Maybe the clouds in question are so high above that our astronauts who have been to the moon have not seen it and cannot see it even with their powerful telescopes. As regards Jesus’ saying to his hearers: **“Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place”** (Mark 13:30), literalists quickly abandon literalism and argue that the evangelist who wrote these things certainly misunderstood what Jesus said, since Jesus could not be wrong. Some of them go on and make concrete plans about meeting Jesus in the clouds, like the unfortunate members of the Heaven’s Gate cult who had carefully packed their cabin luggage for their heavenward flight in a comet. Or like the Korean woman who aborted her

unborn baby because, how could she rapture with all the extra weight of the pregnancy?

Rejecting both rationalism and literalism, the Pope pointed out to us a third way, namely, to recognise these texts as graphic depictions of a gospel message that is always relevant to people of every age and culture. Read in this way, we can pick out these important messages that the text has for us and for people of every generation. Firstly, this world is passing away. Life in this world is like an overvalued high-tech stock that is bound to crash sooner or later. So why should anyone have all their assets in this one stock? It is, therefore, an invitation for us to invest wisely, to invest in things out of this world, to invest in the stock of the kingdom of God.

Secondly, God, the Righteous One will come some day, i.e. the Last Day, to right all the wrongs of this world. Because the world as we know it is a world where often enough the just suffer and evil people prosper. Good people may indeed sleep better at night, but bad people seem to enjoy the waking hours more. If that is all there is to life, then why would anybody want to be good and upright rather than bad and smart? The Good News of the End Times assures us that in the final analysis, evil will catch up with the evildoer, and justice will again be just. This will be in the kingdom of God for which this life is only a preparation. As we say the Lord's Prayer today, let us mean it when we say "Thy kingdom come." -- **Munachi Ezeogu, cssp** (From internet)

November 22, 2015: The Solemnity Christ King

I. Daniel 7:13-14

II. Revelation 1:5-8

III. John 18:33-37

Acknowledging Christ as King

Christians in Nigeria and some other West African countries celebrate Christ the King Sunday with a big, festive parade through the main streets of their cities. This may sound unfamiliar to Christians in other parts of the world, but a public manifestation of faith may not be far from what Pope Pius XI had in mind when, in 1925, he established the feast of Christ the King. The feast is a proclamation of the Christian belief that the reign of Christ should be felt not only in the private lives of Christians but also in the public domain.

The feast was originally celebrated on the last Sunday in October. This meant that only Roman Catholics and Anglo Catholics could celebrate it because Lutherans and most other Protestant churches celebrated Reformation Sunday on the same day. Vatican Council II did well to shift

the feast to the last Sunday of the liturgical year because now most Christians, Catholics and Protestants together, can celebrate it. In this way the whole Church bears common witness to Christ whom we proclaim as king of our lives and of our world.

One reason why the feast was initially celebrated on the last Sunday of October was, perhaps, to associate it with the feast of All Saints on November 1. For, who are the saints if not those generous men, women and children who bore courageous witness to Christ in their lives, private as well as public? One such saint who has been in the news lately is St Thomas More, recently proclaimed patron saint of politicians. Thomas More was a brilliant lawyer and diplomat in 16th century England. His patriotism and loyalty to the throne attracted the attention of King Henry VIII who made him Lord Chancellor of England, the first layperson to be entrusted with such an honourable responsibility. What Henry VIII did not know was that loyal as More was to him, his first loyalty was to Christ the only true king.

When Henry VIII, therefore, decided to divorce his wife Catherine of Aragon, marry Anne Boleyn, and make himself head of the Church of England, More thought this was not right. Rather than approve what he believed to be against the divine will, he resigned from his prestigious and wealthy position as Lord Chancellor and lived a life of poverty. Because he would not give his support to the king, More was arrested, convicted of treason, imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1534 and beheaded in July of the following year. On his way to public execution, More encouraged the people to remain steadfast in the faith. His last recorded words were: "I die the king's good servant, but God's first." For More, it was not simply enough to confess Christ privately in the safety of one's heart and one's family; one must also confess him in one's business and professional life as well as in the laws and policies that govern society.

This does not mean that the kingship of Christ is necessarily a threat to the kingdoms of the world. This was the thinking of Pontius Pilate when he was interrogating Jesus to ascertain whether Jesus was a king. Jesus' answer was that, yes, he was indeed a king, but not the sort of king he had in mind. **"My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here"** (John 18:36). Wherein lies the difference between the kingship of Christ and that of Pilate and other kings of this world? We can name three: (1) Other kingdoms have territorial boundaries but the kingship of Christ is universal. Christ is king without borders. (2) Other kingdoms come and go, but the kingship of

Christ is eternal. (3) Other kingdoms are sustained by military power, but the kingship of Christ is sustained by the power of truth. Citizens of Christ's kingdom must, therefore, stand by the truth even when it is hurting and embarrassing to do so.

When we speak about the kingdom of God in this way, some people ask: what then becomes of patriotism and national loyalty? Patriotism and national loyalty certainly have their place in the Christian life, but loyalty to God comes first. In the name of patriotism and national loyalty some Christians have surrendered their consciences to the state. If the state says it is lawful, then it is all right to do it. A good example is abortion. Or, if the state says it is illegal, then it is wrong to do it. An example is helping an "illegal" immigrant. Today's celebration challenges us to do better than that: to look more critically at the laws and policies governing public life and examine them against the light of the law of Christ. As Christians we should be loyal citizens of our countries, but loyal citizens of God's kingdom first. -**Munachi Ezeogu, cssp** (From internet)

November 29, 2015: I Sunday of Advent

I. Jeremiah 33:14-16 II. 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2 III. Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Is Jesus Christ Still Coming Again?

A certain man, Herbert Washington by name, was so taken up by the nearness of Christ's second coming and rapture that he became a pain in the neck to his coworkers. So his coworkers hatched a plan to pay him back in his own coins. One day, when Herbert went to the washroom, they lay their work clothes on their chairs and hid in the supply room. When Herbert came back from the washroom, he thought the rapture had taken place. The Muslim janitor, who was part of the joke, pretended to have witnessed everyone disappear and ran around the office feigning panic. Herbert fell to the ground clutching his heart and screaming, "I knew you'd forget me, Jesus! What did I do wrong?" He was taken to a local hospital where he was diagnosed of heart attack. He recovered after undergoing bypass surgery. "We didn't mean to scare him to death," said one of his coworkers. "He's just always talking about it, so today we decided to turn the tables on him."

Like Herbert, the Thessalonians to whom Paul wrote were obsessed with the nearness of the second coming of Christ. In his second letter to them, Paul reprimands the Thessalonians for giving up work and living in idleness (2 Thess 3:6-15). Apparently some of them thought that the Lord's coming was so near that there was no point in providing for the future. Such excesses on

the part of believers give non-believers the impression that the second coming of Christ is a fear factor fabricated by Christian preachers to scare people into accepting the faith. Paul's opponents in Thessalonika were making such claims.

Written about the year 50-51 AD, Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians is believed to be the oldest book of the New Testament. Paul had preached in Thessalonika where he established the church. He then moved on to Corinth. There he heard that the young church in Thessalonika was under persecution. So he sent Timothy to go and find out what is happening. When Timothy came back to Paul with his report on the crisis of faith among the believers in Thessalonika, that was when Paul decided to write them this letter (1 Thess 3:5-6).

The enemies of the church in Thessalonika were saying that Paul's teaching that Jesus would come back to take his followers with him was Paul's own fabrication. To support their case they pointed out that some of the first Christians who thought that Jesus was coming back to take them with him were already dead. In other words, they were deluded in their belief. Paul's response is that their death does not mean that they will suffer any disadvantage when Christ comes. At Christ's coming the dead will rise from the dead and, together with the living, they will meet the Lord in mid-air (1 Thess 4:13-18).

If it was problematic for Christians of Paul's time to believe in the second coming of Christ because some of them were dead, it is even more problematic for today's Christians. Many centuries have passed since Paul's time and yet we have not seen Jesus coming in the clouds. Paul himself who believed he would be one of those still living when the Lord comes (1Thess 4:17) is long dead. Besides the notion of the Lord's coming in the clouds was based on a flat earth theory such that as he descended every eye would see him. Such a scenario is more problematic today given what we now know that the earth is spherical. No wonder, then, many Christians today do not take the belief in the second coming of Christ seriously. As a consequence many throw away the baby with the bath water.

Yet the basic faith of the church on the second coming of Christ is that "he will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead." Any thing more specific than that with regard to how and when he will come is not an essential part of the faith and can often prove to be counterproductive. The best way to prepare for the second coming of Christ is not to engage in speculations of how and when and where it will be but, as Paul says, to **"increase and abound in love for one another and for all"** so that we

“may be blameless before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints” (1 Thess 3:12-13). --Munachi Ezeogu, cssp
(From internet)

December 6, 2015: II Sunday of Advent

I. Baruch 5:1-9; II. Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; III. Luke 3:1-6

Kingdom of God Here and Now

The readings of today invite us to reflect on the faithfulness of God in thick and thin. But if that cord of faithfulness is broken, God gives us the trial period which is very clearly seen in the first reading of today. The stiff-necked Israelites were taken as captives to Babylon because of their unfaithfulness. However, God intervened through Prophet Baruch with hope for the future when the people repented of their iniquities.

God listens to our petitions despite our many falls, when we turn to him with humble hearts. Humility touches the heart of God. This is what happened in the lives of the Israelites who kept falling but God never turned away. He always waits with eager longing for their return. This is affirmed in the second reading today where Paul addresses the Philippians that the good work God began will definitely come to fruition, provided they love one another.

The Gospel of today continues to show the faithfulness and compassion of God through the proclamation of John the Baptist. John the Baptist identified himself as the voice which Isaiah prophesied many years back. This voice is a call to repentance. The audience to whom he preached were busy in their own world. The law of the society superseded the law of God. And as a result, compassion was ousted and literal following was imposed. The people of the time were blinded by the cares of the passing world. Today, we are called to prepare the way by the cleansing of the interior and not the exterior. We need to bulldoze aside all that hinders us from loving and caring for the needy world of today. We are called to be prophets in our own ways in removing the walls that separates and build bridges of the kingdom in the here and now.

--Vekupa Rhakho George

Dec 13, 2015: III Sunday of Advent

I. Zephaniah 3;14-18a, II. Philo-4;4-7, III. Luke-3;10-18

God Is with Us

The gospel of the day, invites us to reflect on the basic elements of a genuine conversion. Conversion means “metanoia”, change of heart or attitude. A true conversion begins from listening to the word of God. It is very explicitly seen in the opening sentence of today's gospel. The crowd who listened the word of god, preached by John the Baptist, came to him to ask “what must we do then”. He clearly states that, listening to be fruitful, should lead to action or doing. It is apt here to recall the words of Jesus himself. Jesus says “blessed are those who hear the word of god and obey it”(LK.11:27) John exhorts the people to do the deeds based on justice to spread the fragrance of the gospel in their day to day life situations. Every Christian is called to bear the witness to the gospel in every moment of his/her life. That is why it is said that “church is a missionary by nature”.

Once a person starts to live his /her life in accordance with the gospel, he /she will become aware himself /herself more objectively and this awareness makes a person humble. Humility does not mean the low self-esteem but it is the objective understanding regarding oneself .A true humility enables a person to be honest to oneself and to others. The gospel passage presents John the Baptist as a man of honesty and humility. He did not hesitate to speak out the truth though it declines his status what he had among the people .He boldly, proclaims that one who comes after him is more powerful than him and he is worthy to untie strap of his sandals . Anyone with less honesty and personal integrity would grab avidly the golden opportunity to boost ones ego.

Christmas is the feast of self-denial. Jesus sacrificed his ego by saying” amen” to the will of the Father. Yes we are preparing for great feast of the nativity, let us make a conscious effort to mould our life according to the will of the Father, by listening to the word of god more attentively and putting our soul and mind together to implement the gospel values in our everyday life. Consequently we are capable of making a crib in our heart to welcome the babe of Bethlehem, thus we experience a real Christmas, the Emmanuel experience “the God is with us” in our life.

--Naijo Chittilappilly

December 20, 2015: IV Sunday of Advent

I. Micah 5: 1-4, II. Heb 10: 5-10, III. Luke 1:39-45

The Embrace of Love

Mary wastes no time in rushing to Elizabeth's assistance. Knowing that she will give birth to the Messiah doesn't keep Mary from serving others. On the contrary, her first response is to aid her cousin. What a great example she is for us, who can be easily distracted by our own needs and our own glory. Mary, by setting out for Judah, shows what the presence of Christ in us should do: enkindle charity. How does my charity show itself in my actions, especially as Christmas approaches?

The atmosphere pervading the Gospel scene can be described with a single word: joy! From the moment of the angel's message, Mary is filled with this joy. It impels her to journey "in haste" to serve her cousin Elizabeth and share with her a joy Mary cannot contain within herself. It radiates from Mary's person and causes the infant John the Baptist to leap for joy in his mother's womb. What is the cause of Mary's joy? It is the presence within her womb, through the Holy Spirit's action, of the One who is to come. It is the presence of the One for whom sorrowing mankind has been longing since Adam's fall; the one whom the prophets have promised; the One for whom every heart has been made; the long-awaited Messiah, Our Redeemer, Christ the Lord.

Elizabeth's humility opens her soul to receive the Holy Spirit, who overwhelms her with the experience of Mary's joy. Should we not also be amazed that Christ wishes to come to us anew as a helpless child this Christmas, silently pleading for even a furtive glance from the eyes of our poor heart? Will we deny him that embrace of love for which he has surrendered everything?

Lord, let me imitate your Mother by "carrying" you in my words and deeds each day. Let me be a light to those around me. --Tinto Kodiyan

December 25, 2015: Holy Christmas

I. Isaiah 52:7-10; II. Hebrew 1:1-6; III. John 1:1-18

The Kenosis of Christmas

Christmas comes every year but the question that I would like to pose is why should we celebrate this occasion and continue to remain untouched by

the deep mysteries embedded in it? The most important thing according to me is very clearly indicated in the second reading of today. In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets. But in the last days God spoke to us through his only son, who came and lived like anyone of us.

This same Christ who came and dwelt among us is the same Christ who lived from all eternity before the heavens and the earth were made. The Gospel affirms that nothing came into being without his knowledge. He brings in the message of peace for the broken world which needs healing. The demand is simple but rather hard to follow; *empty yourself and follow me!* Unless there is *Kenosis*, there can be no place for Christ in our hearts.

Christmas brings to us the message of humility because this God who came into the world to live among us, chose to be poor in order to proclaim the love of God through this unexplainable mystery. The message that Christ brings is for all because God wishes all humans to be safe. Christ came not for the Jews alone but for the whole world. The logos that created everything came and dwelt amongst us. This logos was too simple to be identified by anyone, therefore a man came sent by God. He came to bear witness to that light so that everyone might believe through him. He was not the light but he was the pointer to the light. Anyone who listens to this is not born of human will, desire and stock but of God himself. --**Vekupa**

Rhakho George

December 27, 2015: The Holy Family

I. 1 Samuel 1:11, 20-22, 24-28 II. 1 John 3:1-2, 21-24 III. Luke 2:41-52

The Promises of God

Do you recognize the indwelling presence of the Lord Jesus in your life? Blessed are you if you see and recognize the Lord with the “eyes of faith”. To be chosen by God is an awesome privilege and responsibility. Mary received both a crown of joy and a cross of sorrow. Her joy was not diminished by her sorrow because it was fueled by her faith, hope, and trust in God and his promises. Jesus promised his disciples that “no one will take your joy from you” (John 16:22).

Today we celebrate the solemn memorial of the Holy Family: Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. A family begins with the birth of a child. Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem is what began the Holy Family. In today’s Gospel, with Mary and Joseph to guide him, the Son of God grew and was educated. “He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them.” It is a model for every family: love, care, education, obedience.

Mary and Joseph were attentive to Jesus' every step. But no parent is perfect — there are times when the child can slip away. Here we see them racing back to Jerusalem in search of Jesus, as well as their delight at finding him once again. Mary and Joseph experienced the same emotions every parent does while raising a child: moments of anxiety and joy.

Every child needs the authority and direction of parents. The everyday obedience of Jesus to Joseph and Mary both announced and anticipated the obedience of Holy Thursday: 'Not my will. . .' The obedience of Christ in the daily routine of his hidden life was already inaugurating his work of restoring what the disobedience of Adam had destroyed."

Lord, help me to keep my mind on the things above. Remind me today that you dwell in my heart. Let me radiate your presence today in my own family. Let them see your goodness reflected in my words and actions. --C. V. Seban

January 3, 2016: The Feast of Epiphany

I. Isaiah 60:1-6 II. Ephesians 3:2-3,5-6 III. Matthew 2:1-12

Becoming a Star for Others

Epiphany means manifestation. God manifests Himself to non-Jews. The feast tells us that God is not restricted to any particular religion and all those who seek him with a sincere heart are sure to find him. The feast of Epiphany brings home the following four messages strongly in our lives.

a. Search for Christ – We need to search for the right things in the right place (Lk 15:8). The three wise men journeyed to find the newborn King. They searched for Him and found Him. We cannot go to Bethlehem or Jerusalem in search of Jesus. We must search for Christ in our neighbors, in the Word of God and in the sacraments. Our earnest search will keep us united to the Lord and that will enable us to bear fruits in abundance in our lives.

b. Worship Christ – The three wise men offered gold, myrrh and frankincense to the newborn King of the Jews. They bowed down before him and worshiped him. We too are called to worship, to offer our entire being to him. Our surrender should be total and whole-hearted. Only then our offering becomes complete (Lk 21:3). God did not accept the offering of Cain because his heart was not in it. We too must offer wholeheartedly to God that which holds us back in coming closer to Him.

c. Redirect Life – The wise men chose a different route to return to their

homes (Mt 2:12). We must also choose a better way of life, abstaining from proud and impure thoughts, evil habits and selfish behavior. We are called to give new direction to our lives. We must put away the worldly attitudes, values and goals which we might have thus far held dear and we will take on those of Christ, proclaiming by word and deed that Jesus is the Savior of the World.

d. Become a Star for Others – On this feast of Epiphany, we are called to become stars, leading people in the right path. Just as the star led wise men to Jesus, we too are invited to lead others to Jesus. In this context the life of St. Andrew is very exemplary. Whenever his name is mentioned in the gospel we hear him bringing someone to Jesus. He introduces Simon Peter to Jesus, takes the Greek to Jesus, spots the boy who is having bread and fish and takes *him* to Jesus. The Word of God challenges us to share the light of Christ we have received with others who still grope in darkness. We are called to remove the darkness of the evil around us by radiating Jesus' love by selfless service, unconditional forgiveness and compassionate care.
--Vikas Jason Mathias

The Alumni of Papal Seminary and Jnana-Deepa Vidayapeeth are invited for an Internaional Conferece on “Befriending the Othere” on the occasion of sixty years of their existence in Pune, on November 24-28, 2015. Please mark these dates on your calendar.

For details, please visit: www.papalseminary.in

(Due to lack of space,
the regular Book Review Section is regretfully omitted in this issue)

The Editorial Board of AJRS wishes all its Readers a **Happy Christmas** and joyful New Year, 2016.

We also wish **Papal Seminary** on its diamond jubilee in Pune. See the special emblem on the back cover.

Suggestions are welcome to the changes introduced in AJRS. We hope to make more changes from the new year onwards.

Christmas is forever, not for just one day,
for loving, sharing, giving, are not to put away
like bells and lights and tinsel, in some box upon a shelf.
The good you do for others is good you do yourself...
~Norman Wesley Brooks

Happy, happy Christmas, that can win us back to the delusions of
our childish days; that can recall to the old man the pleasures of his
youth; that can transport the sailor and the traveller, thousands of
miles away, back to his own fire-side and his quiet home! ~Charles
Dickens

Instead of being a time of unusual behavior, Christmas is perhaps
the only time in the year when people can obey their natural
impulses and express their true sentiments without feeling self-
conscious and, perhaps, foolish. Christmas, in short, is about the
only chance a man has to be himself. ~Francis C. Farley