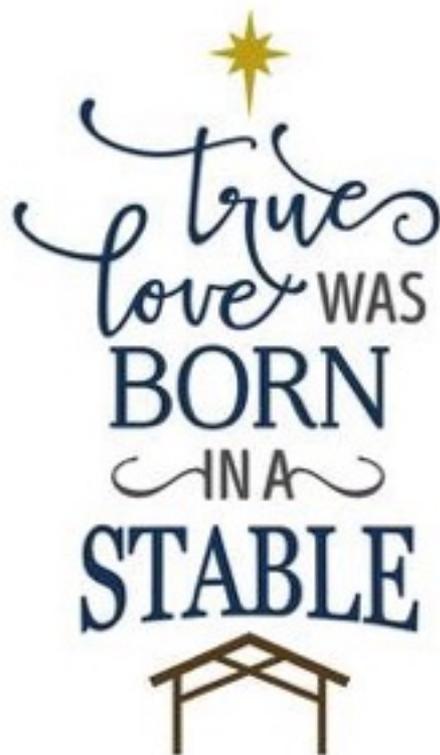


Our Lady of Lourdes Parish
Westville

Advent Programme
2018

Prepare a way for the Lord



WEEK FOUR: LOVE

Sunday 23 December

Scripture: *Luke 1:39-45*

Reflection

The young Mary leaves her home village and makes the arduous one-hundred-and-sixty-kilometre journey to go and visit her pregnant (much older) cousin. This was unusual as women normally remained in their village whilst pregnant and she had just completed her first trimester. She left in a hurry possibly because she wanted to escape the wagging tongues about her outside-marriage-conception, possibly because she feared being stoned to death (the punishment for this “crime”) or possibly because she wanted to honour her cousin. A woman’s status depended on her ability to bear children and the more distinguished the child, the greater the status. The Angel Gabriel had let Mary know that Elizabeth was bearing someone special - John the Baptist. Oh, that women would still be honoured today!

In a twist, as the two expectant mothers meet, the older honours the younger - a complete reversal of the custom. These two women of great personal faith do not keep it private and give glory to the Almighty to the extent that we in 2018 can still share in the event. Glory to God!!

Mary and Elizabeth were expecting and so are we at this time. As the Mother of God prepares to cradle her Child in a feeding trough, we must never forget that she will see her Son die on the Cross. The crucifix overshadows the crib and allows us at one and the same time to absorb the reason for this magnificent virgin birth. A birth on a silent night. A birth to change us.

Practical Suggestion

Look within yourself today and ask yourself what you are expecting on the 25th and if it is not the Birth of Our Lord Jesus Christ, then clear a way for him now - in silence.

Prayer

Thank you, Father, for the impending gift of your Son. May He be born again in our hearts and remain there through the power of that same Spirit through whom he was conceived. Amen.

Monday 24 December

Scripture: *2 Samuel 7: 1-16. Like 1: 67-79.*

Reflection:

In the opening words of today's first reading from Samuel, we hear that David is nominated by God to be the king of the Jews, and he moves into a house that the Lord has given him, but he remains aware and concerned at the fact that "The Ark of God" still dwells in a tent. Obviously his appointment as king had not changed his humility, the humility of a shepherd, one who used to herd his father's sheep.

Then if we go to today's Gospel we hear how Zechariah, one of the temple priests and the father to be of John the Baptist, also remains very humble even though his child was to herald the arrival of Jesus, the Messiah into our world.

Regrettably many of us forget to be humble when we are given authority over others. If we look at the Jewish hierarchy in the time of Jesus we will see, and hopefully realize, that this was very much the reality. They lorded over the rest of God's people, simply because this made them feel good. But they were not "good" in the eyes of the people, and they were certainly not good in the eyes of God.

The greatest mystery in the history of mankind is that we humans don't appear to be able to understand that if we all loved each other as God loves us, we would all be love. Then there would be no crime, no poverty and everyone would be happy and content. We would never be in need, because someone would always be there for us in love.

Regrettably mankind seems to have lost the way because we don't seem to be able to accept God's way. As a result we find ourselves surrounded by conflict, division, selfishness and greed.

Now is a good time to stop and to acknowledge that the way of Jesus makes perfect sense. We should, once again, commit our lives to following as closely as possible in his footsteps and living the way he came to show us. It is only when we do this that we will be able to experience what he came to bring to us: compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, humility, tolerance and forgiveness.

Practical Suggestion

By now we have all celebrated the Sacrament of Reconciliation to prepare our hearts for the Birth of the Saviour. Now we can say "My heart is ready O God, my heart is ready." All that is left is to make that personal invitation in the prayer below: "Come Lord Jesus, come into my heart, Come Lord Jesus come into my life, Come Lord Jesus come and be born again in me.

Prayer

Come Lord Jesus, come into my heart, Come Lord Jesus come into my life, Come Lord Jesus come and be born again in me. Amen.



CHRISTMAS DAY

Scripture: *Luke 2: 3 – 7*

Reflection

If you are reading this today, Christmas Day then good for you! It means that you have taken some time out from all the ‘stuff’ of Christmas to focus on its real meaning, value and significance.

For many people Christmas Day is about eating, drinking and presents. For the true followers of Jesus it is about attending Mass and receiving the Eucharist, and about His Presence.

In an overwhelmingly powerful way we welcome the presence of Jesus born again in our hearts and lives today. During Advent we have prepared a way for his presence within us by our daily reflection on God’s Word in Sacred Scripture, regular attendance at Holy Mass, personal prayer, and by cleansing our hearts through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

What does the Presence of Jesus within us mean today? It means a new beginning! Today is our opportunity to put behind us the things of the past and to start afresh: - our attitude, relationships, behaviour and the lifestyle we choose.

The birth of a baby is always a new beginning and when we began Advent we embarked on a time of preparation so that the celebration of the Saviour’s birth today would enable us to make a fresh start. Each of us knows what we need to change within ourselves and in our lives. How sad it would be if the Saviour’s coming is just about a one day celebration after which we go about being and doing the same as before. Today is a day of meaningful change and transformation in each of us so that tomorrow and the year ahead will be different – and better! This is what Jesus brings!

Practical Suggestion

What things do you need the help and presence of Jesus to change in your life today? Write them down so that you can keep a periodic check on yourself.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, I rejoice in your presence in my life today. Strengthen me, lead me and guide me to live according to your way of love. Amen.

These Daily Reflections for Advent 2018 were written by George Cominos, Lawrence Surgeson, Irene Helsdon, Deacon Mark Wardell, Veronica

Donnelly, Fr Desmond Nair, and Tony Clewlow. Please acknowledge the authors when copying and distributing. We wish you blessed Christmas!