



Christmas Prayer Guide Listening to the Voices at the Crib

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light...” (Is 9 :2)

With the shepherds

After having followed the four JPIC imperatives during the whole of Advent, the approach of Christmas places us with the shepherds.

With them, let us take time to inhabit the outskirts of the cities. Let us go resolutely to the frontiers. This may move us out of our daily routines, away from our reverberating thoughts, to change our point of view, to shift and to watch.



Wikimedia Commons: Fayhoo

Like the shepherds and with them, to feel in communion with all those who live in the darkness of misery, of violence, of abuse. Currently, in northern places, frost and snow are enfolding many migrants and homeless people in the icy cold of solitude and rejection. If we want to join these shepherds, let us walk into the night, without holding back.

We learn from these other watchers, long immersed in the darkness, to let ourselves be guided. We will sharpen our inner senses to perceive more of the reality that surrounds us. Let us also be present, humble, powerless, loving, attentive to these sheep entrusted to us and let us watch... Let us watch.

It is by watching this night, by making it our own, that we will have a chance to detect the light of the Nativity. On the last day of Advent, this phrase of the prophet will have become flesh. Yes, every person who walks in darkness can see a great light... this light that comes to illuminate steps, to warm hearts, to transform horizons.

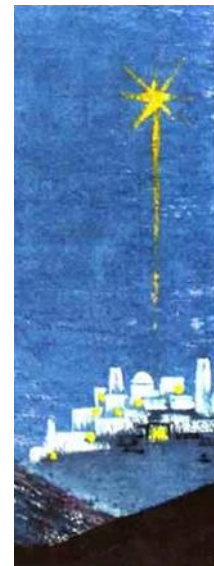
Contemplative walking:

If I wish, I can experience walking at nightfall, at sunrise, meditating on this phrase from Isaiah with so many people present in my heart. Feeling the uncertainty of my steps, in a constant state of moving between imbalance and finding support, to a next step ‘suspended’ in the air before finding the ground that steadies me...

In the night, take time to listen. All sounds seem more meaningful. And then to look, to study the sky like the shepherds... *What do I expect from God?*

*“And you, little child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for Him,
to give His people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,
because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
to shine on those living in darkness
and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace.”*

Luke 1 :76-79



On Christmas Eve: welcome, celebrate and share the presence of the “littlest one”.

They arrive in Bethlehem and meet a newborn child as their King. The incarnation reminds us how God comes to take part in our vulnerability, in all our humanity, with its cries and its hopes.

How does this Nativity shake up our images and expectations of God?

What are the situations of vulnerability in which I experience the birth of the baby Jesus?

It is a fragile, helpless, dependent being that we are given to contemplate in the crib. This vulnerability of Jesus is both a promise and a challenge. *To what does he invite us? What does he say to us, delivered into our hands and giving rise to such unspeakable joy?*

Doesn't he resolutely upset our way of living and thinking TODAY? Doesn't he reveal to us that fragility is also a beginning, a genesis for growth?

And if we were to come a little closer, if we were to go so far as to smell and enter the extreme poverty of the crib, would we not realize that it is in situations of deprivation that an infinite beauty can be revealed?

Listen to the voices at the crib:

Who are our shepherds today, who are already prostrate at the feet of Jesus and who go before us? I let voices resound of men and women whose faces are marked by the trials of life. I can also enter these words spoken by Gabriel and Christian when they addressed Pope Francis:

“My dear friends of Fratello, I am one who has struggled, and like most of you, I have known despair and abandonment in this world that has become more and more ruthless. My journey through the desert has been for me to realize, after the fact of course, the love of God. I think that it is in situations of great precariousness and abandonment that the Lord calls us to great joy for those who know how to hear Him, to seek Him. For He said, "Seek me with all your heart and I will let myself be found." (Gabriel, who spent many years on the streets)

"Despite all this suffering, this moral and psychological torture, we turn to the Lord, and we keep hope." (Christian, stranded far from his family for two years in Lesbos)

Photo by Rachel Guillen rscj



Time for reflection:

To what are the shepherds calling me?

To what does this contemplation of the newborn Jesus invite me?

And what is it that touches me in these voices from the crib?

Music: [Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel](#) / Video: [Nativity](#)

“And at daybreak, I shall let my joy burst forth, to share the marvels of what my eyes have contemplated and to continue to deepen the desire for His coming into every corner of our humanity...”

“Come, rising Sun, splendor of justice and eternal light!”

Rachel Guillen rscj
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