

Breaking Open the Word: Let Us Walk in the Light of the Lord

January 1, 2023: Solemnity Mary, Mother of God / Day of Prayer for Peace

WE READ, LISTEN and BREAK OPEN THE WORD:

Today's Readings: The Book of Numbers 6:22-27, Galatians 4:4-7 and the Gospel: Luke 2:16-21. While someone reads the Scripture(s), listen well. BE AWARE OF THE IMAGE BEING PAINTED, OR THE STORY BEING TOLD. DOES THE STORY OR THE IMAGE CALL TO MIND ANYTHING SIMILAR IN YOUR OWN LIFE EXPERIENCE? Share your impressions.

In Deuteronomy there is a theme that is repeated throughout the book. One version is, **Today I place before you Life and Death. Choose Life.** (Dt 30:15, 30:19) That same theme is picked up in variety of other places. The call is to see what stands before us and to engage in the invitation to respond – to obey which equals to “listen!” Note that there is but one choice, for Life, and that is “Choose Life!”

- ✓ *What is your process of discerning action, response (in an argument), to maintain personal health, forming a political opinion or spiritual value?*
 - ✓ *To what/whom do you listen?*
 - ✓ *If you are listening, what do you hear? To what purpose do you use the information?*
- The shepherds...found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. ... [the shepherds] made known the message that had been told them about this child [by the angels].
- ✓ *The what? To whom? What message? (Angels = Messengers – not necessarily heavenly beings)*
 - ✓ *What would you do with a greeting like this?*
 - ✓ *When have you been totally befuddled or beside yourself and not sure which way to go and unexpectedly was “visited” by someone you knew, or did not know, who offered a bit of advice or a metaphor that helped you clarify the situation for you, how did you receive the comment or advice?*

The “angels” message to the shepherds and in turn to the parents was that this child was in and with God in a special way. Judgement and slavery are past. Forgiveness and hope are present.

Then Paul lays it out for us: **God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, “Abba, Father!” You are no longer a slave but...also an heir,**

Well?!? That sort of sinches it for us – doesn't it?

The one we have been seeking has also sought us. The one who sought us, has already found us!

The singularity of Deuteronomy's challenge to Choose Life, is also God's challenge to discover us: the created sought after by the Creator.

- ✓ *Let's make it a proposal: “Do you accept me as your Creator? ...to have and to hold from this day forward to eternity?”*
- ✓ *What is Creator's response to you? Life (originator) choosing Life (the creature) for Life (being)!*
- ✓ *How can Creator ever dream of saying “No!”?*

Then the author of Numbers has Creator prompting Moses to teach the people then as well as the people now (AKA us): Speak to Aaron and his sons and tell them: **This is how you shall bless** the Israelites.

The LORD bless you and keep you!

The LORD let his face shine upon you and be gracious to you!

The LORD look upon you kindly and give you peace!

Try replacing your name for all of the “you_s” in that blessing text. Now: write the blessing in you heart. Let it guide you and people in your lives!

Prayers for the World in Which We Live: Pope Francis, Christmas 2021

Jesus Christ is *the way of peace*. May we build a world open and free to live in fraternity and peace. Let us follow that road! Help us divest ourselves of the burdens that weigh us down and block our way. We Pray: Jesus, show us the Way of Peace!

Our time suffers from a *famine of peace*. May the Child Jesus sustain Christian communities in countries torn by Religious strife. May they develop the beauty of fraternal respect between individuals of different faiths. We Pray: Jesus, show us the Way of Peace!

On this day, let us gaze on Bethlehem, a town whose name means “house of bread.” Let us be aware of people who go hungry, sharing as we can with them. We Pray: Jesus, show us the Way of Peace!

As in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Yemen, Palestine, the countries of the Horn of Africa and elsewhere food is used as a weapon, hindering its distribution to people already suffering. On this day, let us learn from the Prince of Peace and commit ourselves to making food solely an instrument of peace. We Pray: Jesus, show us the Way of Peace!

As we enjoy gathering with our loved ones, let us think of families that experience great hardship and those that, in this time of economic crisis, are struggling as a result of unemployment and lacking in the necessities of life. We Pray: Jesus, show us the Way of Peace!

Jesus, you are the true light in a world sick with indifference, rejecting you as in many foreigners. May we be attentive to displaced persons and refugees who knock at our door in search of some comfort, warmth and food. We Pray: Jesus, show us the Way of Peace!

Jesus you are the true light in a world sick with indifference as it ignores you in the poor. Let us not forget the marginalized, those living alone, orphans, our elders and prisoners. We Pray: Jesus, show us the Way of Peace!

Bethlehem shows us the simplicity of God, who reveals himself not to the wise and the intelligent but to the little ones, to those with pure and open hearts. Like the shepherds, let us set out to be amazed by the God who becomes flesh for our salvation. We Pray: Jesus, show us the Way of Peace!

The Living Word, the source of all good, makes himself poor, asking as alms our own poor humanity. Let us allow ourselves to be moved by the love of God and accept a share in his fullness. We Pray: Jesus, show us the Way of Peace!