



## **BECOMING JESUS PERSONAL FRIEND**

**Gospel Meditations for Christmas and Beyond<sup>1</sup>**



### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The celebration of Christmas is a reminder that God became part of our human history. He was born in Bethlehem as little baby who began growing up one day at a time (Lk. 2:40).

The Gospel of John, speaking of Christmas, says that “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we have seen his glory” (Jn. 1:14), a phrase that can be paraphrased by saying that “God became one of us; dwelt in one of our towns; bought a house in our neighborhood and became our neighbor”. Beautiful! He did this out of love for you and me, because he wanted to be a member of our human family, a friend to you and me (Jn. 15:15) until the end of time (Mt. 28:20).

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<sup>1</sup> Art by: <http://writerfox.hubpages.com/hub/Heart-Pictures>

As we all know by experience, friendship is nurtured by frequent personal encounters. Unfortunately, the many things we need to do every day and the worry that comes along, often get in the way, leaving little room for a personal intimate encounter with Jesus, the friend who can transform our lives and fill our hearts with joy and peace.

As we approach the celebration of Christmas, let me invite you to meet Jesus and some of the people he encountered during his life, by doing a wholehearted meditation of some gospel passages. I hope this spiritual reading will result in a new way to celebrate Christmas and befriend Jesus during 2015.

## 2. A SECRET TO FRIENDSHIP

Many people met Jesus during his earthly life, and probably all of them were impacted by his presence. The Gospels gave us only some of these stories as a reminder and a lesson for all the generations to come, for us, who meet Jesus by faith (Jn. 21:25).

The secret of the women and men who encountered Jesus during his earthly life is very simple: They got in touch with him in their daily activities and the encounter touched their lives and made a difference. How did this happen?

STEP ONE: They shared with Jesus their joys and sorrows in a plain, honest way.

STEP TWO: They listened to his words, captured his gestures and were able to read in between the lines when Jesus remained silent. In so doing, they found a response to their joys, sorrows and needs in a profound unforgettable way that changed their lives.

I invite you to follow the two simple steps outlined above and get on the way to encounter Jesus in your daily life.

STEP ONE: Read the proposed Gospel passages and discover how these people talked to him.

STEP TWO: Discover how Jesus welcomed them and established with them a person to person relationship.

Now give yourself the opportunity to encounter Jesus by journaling a little bit about yourself!

STEP ONE: Share with Jesus what you are going through now: your joys and sorrows, your needs, plans and dreams.

STEP TWO: Remembering what Jesus said to the women and men of his time, and the way he treated them, give yourself the opportunity to listen to what Jesus is going to tell you and journal about the personal feelings which may result from this encounter.

To facilitate these meditations, I offer you a series of Gospel passages and a blank space to write your own personal reflections. The last meditation is about the birth of Baby Jesus. Let the whole scene speak to you: Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, the angels, the manger and the singing. Begin the dialogue with whomever you feel most comfortable with.

May Jesus become, more and more, the joy of your life and your best friend!

### 3. MEDITATION GRID

#### GOSPEL READING

What did the women and men say to Jesus	Jesus' Response
<p>Mt. 8:6-13. When he entered Capernaum, a centurion approached him and appealed to him, saying, "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, suffering dreadfully.</p> <p>The centurion said in reply, "Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed. For I too am a person subject to authority, with soldiers subject to me. And I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come here,' and he comes; and to my slave, 'Do this,' and he does it."</p>	<p>He said to him, "I will come and cure him."</p> <p>When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those</p>

	following him, “Amen, I say to you, in no one in Israel* have I found such faith.”
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#### JOURNALING

What do you want to say to Jesus	Jesus’ response to you and your reaction

#### GOSPEL READING

What did the women and men say to Jesus	Jesus’ Response
<p>Mk. 7: 24-30.</p> <p>From that place he went off to the district of Tyre. He entered a house and wanted no one to know about it, but he could not escape notice. Soon a woman whose daughter had an unclean spirit heard about him. She came and fell at his feet. The woman was a Greek, a Syrophoenician by birth, and she begged him to drive the demon out of her daughter.</p> <p>She replied and said to him, “Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s scraps.”</p>	<p>He said to her, “Let the children be fed first. For it is not right to take the food of the children and throw it to the dogs.”</p>

	Then he said to her, “For saying this, you may go. The demon has gone out of your daughter.”
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#### GOSPEL READING

What did the women and men say to Jesus	Jesus’ Response
<p>Mk. I: 40-45.</p> <p>A leper came to him [and kneeling down] begged him and said, “If you wish, you can make me clean.”</p>	<p>Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, “I do will it. Be made clean.” The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. Then, warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once. Then he said to him, “See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them.”</p>

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### GOSPEL READING

What did the women and men say to Jesus	Jesus' Response
<p><b>Jn. 8:1-11.</b>  Then each went to his own house, while Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. But early in the morning he arrived again in the temple area, and all the people started coming to him, and he sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery and made her stand in the middle. They said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. Now in the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?" They said this to test him, so that they could have some charge to bring against him</p>	

<p>She replied, “No one, sir.”</p>	<p>Jesus bent down and began to write on the ground with his finger. But when they continued asking him, he straightened up and said to them, Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” Again he bent down and wrote on the ground.</p> <p>And in response, they went away one by one, beginning with the elders. So he was left alone with the woman before him. Then Jesus straightened up and said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”</p> <p>Then Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go, [and] from now on do not sin any more.”</p>
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#### JOURNALING

What do you want to say to Jesus	Jesus’ response to you and your reaction

**CHOOSE ONE GOSPEL READING OF YOUR PREFERENCE AND DO THE SAME STEPS YOU ALREADY KNOW**

What did the women and men say to Jesus	Jesus' Response

**JOURNALING**

What do you want to say to Jesus	Jesus' response to you and your reaction

**THE BIRTH OF BABY JESUS**

Gospel Reading	Journaling
<p>Lk. 2: 1-20.</p> <p>In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of</p>	



David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

*The Visit of the Shepherds.* When the angels went away from them to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made

known to us.” So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them. <sup>2</sup>	
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Dear sister/brother,

I hope these meditations helped you to welcome Jesus as the joy of your life and your best friend!

Fraternally,

Domenico Di Raimondo, msps

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<sup>2</sup> Gospel quotes taken from <http://www.usccb.org/bible/luke/2>