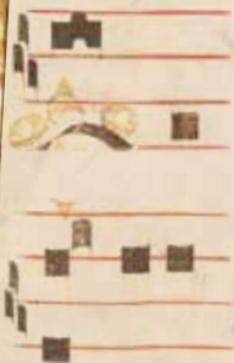


The Voice of the Word that Announces



Prayer Itinerary for the Family
Advent & Christmas 2019-2020



Dear Families,

Advent is a special time for announcements
for every man and every woman,
starting from the voice of the angel who,
in a small village in Galilee,
made the impossible possible
reaching the heart of the young Maria,
of the carpenter Joseph,
of the shepherds around Bethlehem,
of the wise from the Far East.

The hope is that each of us
should leave the heart open
to the voices in which the Voice resounds.

Because our waiting
can turn to what really matters,
to those who really save.

Good walk!
+ *Francesco*

**“It is the voice of Jesus
who ‘sends’ Mary of Magdala.
It is His voice
that the disciples recognized
in that of Mary.
It is the voice of Jesus,
resounding in those multitude
of runs throughout the centuries,
that we can still listen to,
be able to recognize it
“alive, living, life-giving”,
even in our existence,
becoming in turn its voice.”**

Thus writes Bishop Francis
in his pastoral letter.

With this attention to the
voice that reaches our lives,
we are called to live this
time of Advent. Advent,
traditionally, is a **time of
waiting** towards Christmas;
also wants to be a **path of
training** in the recognition
of what God announces of
good and good in our lives.
The Lord who comes is a

source of joy if we know
how to recognize his Word,
his voice already at work in
our lives as Christians. A
life made up of questions
and fears, commitments
and habits, which on the
example of Mary of Mad-
gala can become an echo
of good news, of the Good
News for all men.

A particular **voice** of this time of Advent will surely be given by the **Word of God** which the Liturgy proposes every day and which **will mark the step of our daily prayer.**

Alongside this, there will also be the **words of a parish priest** of our Diocese who, with competence and passion, commented on the passage of the daily Gospel, sharing what the Voice suggested to his mind and his heart.

A third word is entrusted to **prayer in a responsorial form**, offered by two lay collaborators of pastoral of-

fices: they are suggested by the Word read and prayed and invite each of us to enrich it with personal intentions.

A fourth word comes from reality, from the **life experience of some young people and not**, told by the pen of two journalists who try to trace in them those signs of conversion possible only to those who let themselves be met by God who becomes man and who invites us to become a voice in our turn.

A fifth and final word is entrusted to the **artistic-spiritual commentary of the miniatures** chosen by the diocesan artistic heritage. These words are the gift of a **diocesan priest**: they will help us discover

**Oh, happy reader,
wash your hands
before touching the book,
turn the pages
with dedication
and do not touch the letters
with your fingers!
Those who cannot write
cannot imagine what
this hard job is.**



**Noah in conversation
with God**

the spiritual richness that is contained in the small and astonishing of attention to the detail expressed by those fingers that write and paint, as if the whole body were to participate in the work.

**Oh what effort it is
to write:
it blurs the eyes,
torments the kidneys
and it hurts
the limbs of everyone**

- da un dizionario visigoto dell'VIII secolo -



Annunciation



**John The Baptist
in prison**



St. Joseph



Nativity



**Adoration
of the Magi**



A voice that...I send!

Not much is needed to listen: a little time, a welcoming space, lots of good will. When we are called to listen as Christians, listening takes

on a profound dimension: many of us commit ourselves in our Diocese to offer space and time for those in difficulty. A space in which **listening is charity** and moves society **to create fertile conditions around that neighbor** who knocks on the door and who brings forth solidarity, understanding, opportunities.

These spaces, in addition to the **generous response to the voice that sends us to open the door to others, require us to adapt to society**, to be “in step with the times”. In 2019 it is essential to have access to technology: it means recovering resources, creating links, speeding up practices, enhancing skills. It is a support for those who get involved for “the esteem and care of human experiences”, contrasting “the increasingly devastating conditions of injustice and inequality that weaken the social fabric” (from the Pastoral Letter 2019-2020 A voice that sends).

In the 2019 Advent, Caritas Diocesana Bergamasca invites the parishes of the Diocese to raise funds for the **purchase of computer equipment**, for the spaces where they listen to others and involve the community.



To donate:

IN PERSON

c/o Caritas Diocesana Bergamasca
in via del Conventino, 8 – Bergamo
(lun-ven 9-12.30 / 14.30-18)

BANK TRANSFER

in favor of Caritas Diocesana Bergamasca
BANCO POPOLARE
Filiale della Malpensata – Bergamo
IBAN: IT 69 E 05034 11105 000000006330
Causal:
Project Una Voce Che Invio – Avvento 2019

FOR INFORMATION

Elena Sarzilla
promozione@caritasbergamo.it

The Voice of the Word announces:

“The Son of man comes”



In a world where everyone risks getting carried away by everyday affairs, as if life depended only on their efforts, Noah finds time to talk to God, realizes that God exists and deserves his attention. In the miniature Noah is on his knees with his

hands clasped and his face lifted upwards. In the sky studded with stars, God is made present. While others

Historical Archive of the Diocese of Bergamo, Fondo Capitolo Cattedrale,
CORALE 5 - già Cap. F, p. 44r.

Noah in conversation with God, miniature for the first Sunday of Advent.

risk thinking that one cannot even imagine a help from above, Noah discovers that there is Someone who shows him the way, offers him new criteria for evaluating the things of earth, of the sense of history and gives it the courage to do something that no one deems wise: to build an ark!

God opens his arms to welcome Noah's prayer and questions, the right one. It strikes his face, marked by a considerable age - just look at the gray of his hair and his beard - he doesn't have the features of an old man: he looks like a young man. God is painted with the young face of Jesus: for he is, as Saint Paul says, the image of the invisible God (Col 1,15); He is the Son and that is the One who revealed the Father (see Jn 1:18).

Looking better, one also notices a certain similarity between God / Jesus and Noah: even Noah has hair and beard of the same color as Jesus, he does not appear particularly old and wears a red gown with gold outlines. We can think that whoever seeks God in his life and cultivates the relationship with him progressively resembles him. Noah is the right man who resembles Jesus because Christ will be the fulfillment of every figure of a man who believed and was a friend of God. And we too can dare to think that our very face can come to resemble more and more of those of Noah and therefore of Jesus.

Sign of the cross

From the Gospel of Matthew (24, 37-44)

As were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of man. In fact, as in the days before the flood they ate and drank, took wives and took husbands, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not notice anything until the flood came and swept everyone away: so will the coming of the Son of man.

Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken away and the other left.

Two women will grind at the mill: one will be taken away and the other left.

*Watch therefore, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. Try to understand this: if the landlord knew at what time of the night the thief comes, he would watch over and not let the house be broken open. So you also get ready because, at the time you don't imagine, **the Son of man comes.***



The Voice of the Parish Priest



Not knowing the day when the Lord will come is like not knowing at what time of the night the thief will come. What a thief would be when working on an “appointment”; that professor is one who questions only in a “programmed” way. But the Lord is not a thief from whom he cannot let his house be broken or a professor from whom he cannot be caught unprepared. The Lord is the one in whom we live, move and exist. In him “we eat and drink, we take

a wife and husband, we are in the field to plow or grind to grind.”

Watching means carefully treating the quality of everyday life, because the outcome of life depends on the way in which we live the very real everyday realities: it depends on how we eat and drink; from how we take wife and husband, that is from how we build, maintain, restore and refine relationships; from how we stand in the field or at the millstone, that is from how we work



Prayer

To renew this year also our faith in your coming,
We are waiting for you, Lord.

To live our days more intensely,
We are waiting for you, Lord.

To improve our relationships,
We are waiting for you, Lord.

To be more attentive to those who live next to us,
We are waiting for you, Lord.





In my career as a forest warden I have seen everything. Fires that seem to break out of nowhere, but are instead the work of arsonists, or of distracted tourists. I participated in courageous actions by our Fire Brigade to extinguish huge fires that could have been prevented. These episodes are often cited in the news as “tragic fatalities”. Fires caused by heat, drought, misfortune ... inevitable events. We get used to the tragedy, without caring to understand the causes, or how we could limit the damage. I was born in a mountain town, near a nature reserve, and I know how many controversies break out every year because of the fires in my area. Each accuses the other of not having done enough: “The Forestry Corps has not checked the territory!” Or “The hikers have not respected the safety rules!”. This is the wrong attitude. Experience has shown us that during the dry season at least one fire breaks out in our woods. We do not know when the fire will break out, or where, but we know it will happen. Therefore we must stop talking about these events as “fatality”, passively waiting for the next disaster, with resignation. We must rather act in a spirit of alert waiting. Forest rangers, local people and tourists must work together to protect the territory and avoid risky behavior. In this way, when the fire breaks out, we will have more chances to save the forest, and not by chance, but because we will be ready, all together.



Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of Matthew
(8,8)*

never up to par, always inadequate.

*The centurion replied:
“Lord, I am not worthy
that you enter under my
roof, but say only one
word and my servant will
be healed.”*

What dignity this man who says he is not worthy: he does not exhibit merit and makes no claims, but invokes a word that heals. Jesus is the word that can heal us of the two serious diseases that afflict our dignity: the pride of those who believe they are too worthy and the despondency of those who, on the contrary, feel continually unworthy,

Prayer

To overcome evil,
**We need your help,
Lord.**

To heal our wounds,
**We need your help,
Lord.**

To overcome our
weaknesses,
**We need your help,
Lord.**

Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of Luke
(10.21)*

In that same hour Jesus rejoiced in the Holy Spirit and said: "I give you praise, oh Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned and revealed them to the little ones. Yes, Father, because you have decided in your benevolence".

It is an immense joy to be able to convey to the loved ones the taste of things that are believed to be most precious, those that warm the heart and illuminate the mind. To the little God the Father manages to deliver the

taste of his things: this is why Jesus exults. The goodness and beauty of God can be enjoyed only by recognizing oneself as small and appreciating the little ones.

Prayer

To learn the wisdom of
the heart,
**Teach us to be small,
Lord.**

To taste true joy,
**Teach us to be small,
Lord.**

To stay close to you,
**Teach us to be small,
Lord.**

Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of Matthew
(15,32-33)*

*Then Jesus called his
disciples to him and said:
“I feel compassion for
the crowd. They have
been with me for three
days now and they have
nothing to eat. I do not
want to postpone fasting,
so that they do not fail
along the way”.*

Prayer

With those who
suffer,
**We want to be
compassionate like
you, Lord.**

With those in need,
**We want to be
compassionate like
you, Lord.**

With those who
have no voice to ask
for help,
**We want to be
compassionate like
you, Lord..**

Sign of the cross

From the Gospel of Matthew

(7.21)

*Not everyone who says:
“Lord, Lord”, will enter the
kingdom of heaven, but the
one who does the will of my
Father in heaven.*

How many ways do we name the Lord but do not do his will: we pray the “Our Father” and not treat others as brothers; we speak with courtesy and kindness to someone, when it is convenient, and then, behind him, we speak ill of him; we prefer acid gossip to fraternal correction. Jesus speaks of the Lord “not speaking often, but trying to love us as He loves us.

Prayer

Without so many words,
**Help us to do your will,
Lord.**

With a big heart,
**Help us to do your will,
Lord.**

Enlightened by your
Spirit,
**Help us to do your will,
Lord.**

Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of Matthew
(9.27)*

*While Jesus went away
from there, two blind
men followed him
shouting: "Son of David,
have mercy on us!"*

Sometimes false blinds are found that take advantage of the pity of social assistance with impunity. But when you are really blind, you are really in need of pity, support and guidance of a stick. Recognizing that we need, not to demand assistance, but to humbly ask for help, is not easy, but it is very human and necessary.

Prayer

Of all our mistakes,
Have mercy on us Lord.

Of our selfishness,
Have mercy on us, Lord.

Of our pride,
Have mercy on us, Lord.

Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of John
(10.14-15)*

*I am the good shepherd,
I know my sheep and my
sheep know me, just as
the Father knows me and
I know the Father, and I
give my life for the sheep.*

To get to know each other, it is not enough to look at the identity card of a stranger or spend a lot of time next to a relative, a school friend, a work colleague. Interpersonal knowledge requires a willingness to tell oneself sincerely and a willingness to listen carefully. And knowing that one can become a good shepherd, good father, good brother.

Prayer

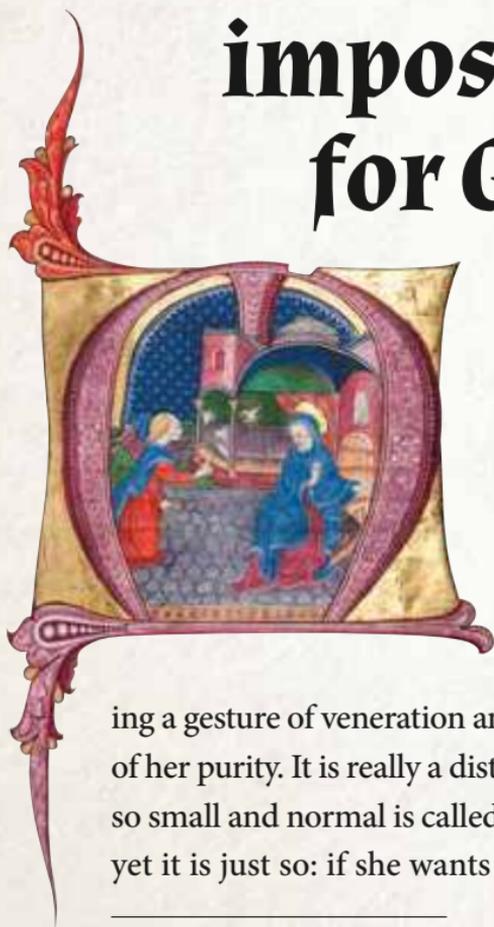
Because you know us
deeply,
You are our guide, Lord.

To show us the way,
You are our guide, Lord.

Because you give us life,
You are our guide, Lord.

The Voice of the Word announces:

“ Nothing is impossible for God ”



The angel seems to take Mary suddenly, as if behind her, the surprise of the Transcendent is turning towards him. The angel, who, as messenger of God, holds a great dignity, kneels before her mak-

ing a gesture of veneration and handing her a lily, a sign of her purity. It is really a distortion that Mary lives: she, so small and normal is called to such a great thing! And yet it is just so: if she wants to, she will be the mother

Historical Archive of the Diocese of Bergamo, Fondo Capitolo Cattedrale,
CORALE 2 - già Cap. B, f. 99r.

Annunciation, miniature for the second Sunday of Advent.

of the Messiah. The movement of his garments tells of his being called to a change of vision: God is the God of the little ones and carries out his project with those who would seem to be quite unfit to carry out great works.

Everything happens in a beautiful house, in discretion and intimacy. This house is depicted as open on two sides: the floor continues even beyond the limits of the walls and the rest of the house is open to the sky. Mary is sitting on a real throne, supported by a rich pillow: even in these details, the illuminator wanted to emphasize the dignity of that girl. A dignity entirely linked to her Yes, to her freedom made available to God.

And from heaven comes the dove of the Holy Spirit that seems to glide over a strip of golden drops of light. Looking at her, her eyes are easily directed to see the bed in the background. The drawn curtain makes us recognize it as a real alcove. Psalm 45 comes to mind, singing the meeting between the king and the queen. Mary will be the bride of God. With and in her God becomes man and takes part with him in an irreversible, definitive way. God is never as we expect it: he overwhelms us, upsets us, asks us for a change of look. And surprisingly, it takes his collaborators, even the impossible.

Sign of the cross

From the Gospel according to Luke (1, 26-38)

In the sixth month, the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin, betrothed to a man from the house of David, named Joseph. The virgin was called Mary. Entering her, he said: "Rejoice, full of grace: the Lord is with you".

At these words she was very upset and wondered what sense a greeting like this had. The angel said to her: "Do not be afraid, Mary, because you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive a child, you will give birth to him and you will call him Jesus. He will be great and he will be called Son of the Most High; the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father and will reign forever on the house of Jacob and his kingdom will have no end ".

*Then Mary said to the angel: "How will this be, for I know no man?" The angel replied: "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with his shadow. Therefore the one who will be born will be holy and will be called the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, in her old age also conceived a son, and this is the sixth month for her, who was called barren: **nothing is impossible to God** ». Then Mary said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: let it be done for me according to your word". And the angel turned away from her.*

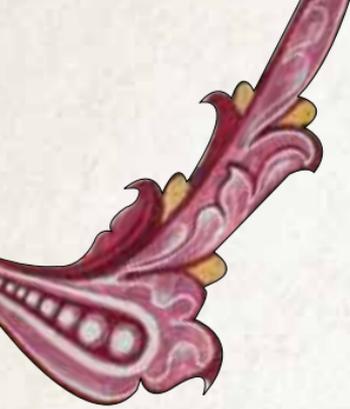


The Voice of the Parish Priest



Is it really true that “nothing is impossible for God”? If one of his envoys, authoritative as the angel Gabriel, says so, there is reason to believe him; but, as soon as it reaches our ears, this statement risks being misrepresented. With some ease we exchange “power is everything” with “being able to afford whatever comes to us.” If so, it would not be true at all that God is omnipotent. God cannot do everything, only what Love can do.

The power of “making love” without love is typical of human arbitrariness; the range of this possibility is very wide: it goes from sexual acts, realized as pure satisfaction of instinct, to the apparent generosity of donations, even great ones, but devoid of sincere charity. Man is not omnipotent, but he is often overbearing; God, on the other hand, is omnipotent in love and, therefore, he is never overbearing.



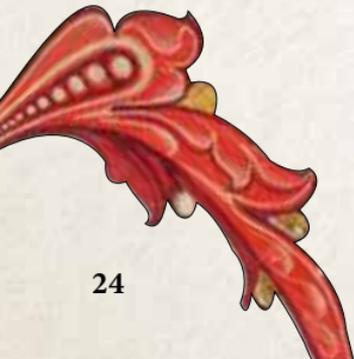
Prayer

When we wish for a full life,
Mary Immaculate accompany our life.

When fatigue prevails over joy,
Mary Immaculate accompany our life.

When we experience the care of others,
Mary Immaculate accompany our life.

When we touch God's love first hand,
Mary Immaculate accompany our life.





He found it in front of him. Clearly on the run. The uniform betrayed him as an allied soldier. But he wasn't American. Tall and with that air of coming from all over the world. An air lost at the bottom of the eyes.

Domi's parents had hidden it along with two others and luckily the patrols had not found it. '44 had passed. And then the spring of 1945 had arrived. Domi, who brought food to the illegal immigrants, had received ... three marriage proposals and had chosen him. Naturally they had fallen in love. Naturally he had returned home to South Africa to finish university. And then he had reappeared all over the world and got married and this time it was she who left her country to discover a beautiful and hard land. And cruel, in those years, with those who were not white. But being a black child wasn't the worst. The worst was being a disabled black child.

Nobody cared about you. None at all. Domi discovers one in the backyard of a slum, where the things to be thrown away were piled up. And another in a hut and takes them with him. Soon mothers bring them to them, disabled children. Take them. Daniel helps out, eventually full time. From the war they had learned that life should not be destroyed, but kept. Saved if it crosses your path.

Little Eden, Small Paradise, the structure founded in South Africa, on the outskirts of Johannesburg, by Domitilla Rota from Bergamo and her husband Daniel Hyams, in 40 years has welcomed over a thousand severely handicapped children.



Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of Luke
(5.18)*

*And here, some men,
carrying a man who was
paralyzed on a bed, tried
to get him in and put him
in front of him.*

Men who give their legs to a man with paralyzed legs: gesture of charity. And they bring him before Jesus: a gesture of faith. The charity received allows this man to walk even without legs, thanks to the legs of others. And faith in Jesus not only heals his legs. Charity and faith do not replace medicine, but heal much more deeply.

Prayer

Towards our brothers
who are waiting for
support,

**Make us capable of
charity.**

Towards the poor who
depend on others,

**Make us capable of
charity.**

Towards the sick who are
waiting for comfort,

**Make us capable of
charity.**

Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of Matthew
(18.12)*

What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them gets lost, won't he leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go and look for the one who is lost?

It seems to us that if these ninety-nine sheep remain safe you can also go and look for the hundredth, otherwise maybe not because, in the meantime, unattended, others can also get lost. But if we were one of the ninety-nine who see the shepherd so good as to venture out in search of the lost one, would we not feel the joy of being so loved, to be afraid of turning away from him?

Prayer

We are certain that you
are close to us,
You are our pastor.

We cannot be afraid of
feeling abandoned,
You are our pastor.

Every person you care
about,
You are our pastor.

Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of Matthew
(11.28)*

*Come to me, all you who
are tired and oppressed,
and I will give you rest.*

Fatigue and oppression, sooner or later, for one reason or another, they affect everyone. The antidote proposed by Jesus is not an anti-stress therapy, a restorative drug, a long relaxing vacation. His recipe is to learn from him the gentleness and humility of the heart. Arrogance, greed, arrogance and pride cause fatigue and oppression; mildness and humility offer refreshment.

Prayer

When we believe we are
indispensable,

**Give us humility of
heart.**

When others ask for sup-
port,

**Give us humility of
heart.**

When we need refresh-
ment,

**Give us humility of
heart.**

Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of Matthew
(11.11)*

*In truth I tell you: among
those born of women no
one was born greater
than John the Baptist;
but the smallest in the
kingdom of heaven is
greater than he.*

John is the outstanding man for moral stature, for the will to make himself small so as to make Jesus grow; but the tenderness of God, who in Jesus came to reign among us, gives us a greatness greater than that of the Baptist. The most intense commitment and the most exalted heroism of those who act with his strength is smaller than any sprout generated by the Holy Spirit.

Prayer

In the face of the poor,
**We meet your
tenderness.**

In the future of our
children,
**We meet your
tenderness.**

In the suffering of
the sick,
**We meet your
tenderness.**

Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of Matthew
(11.17)*

*“We played the flute and
you didn’t dance, we sang
a lament and you didn’t
beat your chest!”*

How much Jesus suffers for the behavior of those who complain often and willingly, continually finding reasons to criticize and condemn, without grasping the good and the beautiful of what others are and do, without getting involved, unavailable to rejoice with those who rejoice and cry with those who cry. How easy, comfortable and slippery it is to remain indifferent and unmoved.

Prayer

When we see only the
glass half empty,
**Give us eyes to see po-
sitivity.**

When we are not able to
enjoy the joys of others,
**Give us eyes to see po-
sitivity.**

When we cling to our
positions,
**Give us eyes to see po-
sitivity.**

Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of Matthew
(17.12)*

But I say to you: Elijah has already come and they did not recognize him; indeed, they made him what they wanted. Thus also the Son of man will have to suffer through them “.

Elijah is a prophet and, like all prophets, has been annoying. Those who annoy themselves are in great danger of having to suffer, of making a bad end, because we are easily intolerant to the calls of the prophets, to the corrections and to warnings of danger on the part of those who warn us that if we sow evil, we are destined to collect it. But for the prophets to tell the truth is worth more than saving one's skin.

Prayer

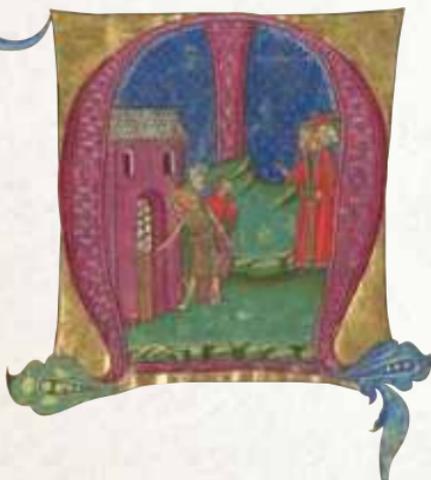
Recognizing your face in others,
We prepare your coming.

Looking for signs that tell us about you,
We prepare your coming.

Listening to your Word,
We prepare your coming.

The Voice of the Word announces:

“**Are you the one
who has to come?**”



It seems that John has no need for the guards to be taken to prison: he is the one who reaches for the prison door and wants to open it. He must be firm and self-conscious, he goes there because he knows he is faithful to the

truth, that truth that Herod does not want and cannot accept. For this reason the rich king, with the crown on his head and dressed in a sumptuous red robe, trimmed

Angelo May Civic Library and Historical Archive of the Municipality, MIA,
ANTIFONARIO III (kind permission).

John the Baptist in Prison,
miniature for the third Sunday of Advent.

with leather and a rich turban, gives the command to shut up the prophet who denounces his sin without fear and invites him shouting to go the way of justice. The distance between the two is not only spatial, it is much deeper: it is of vision, of approach to things, of lifestyle. One is linked to power and appearance; the other, namely John, to essentiality and truth. The one prefers to stay up high; the other is willing to go down into darkness and isolation. One is surrounded by a condescending court, the other is willing to live in solitude. It will be precisely in order not to lose power and the ambiguous condescension of the court that, later, the king will condemn the prophet to death.

This Sunday's Gospel tells us that it will be just beyond that gate and beyond that door that John will have to face the last test. And it will be the proof of fidelity to Jesus, to his absolutely unsettling way of being Messiah. It will be from the depths of that prison that the radical question: "Are you the true Messiah?" From the depths of the cell, John will discover that the Messiah asks him to share everything: even an unjust death. The mystery of the incarnation for God means that he reaches the sharing of man's death. It is such a radical choice that brings God to share the most unjust death we can imagine.

Sign of the cross**From the Gospel of Matthew (11, 2-11)**

John, who was in prison, having heard of the works of Christ, sent through his disciples to tell him: "Are you the one who must come or must we wait for another?"

Jesus answered them: "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind get their sight back, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise, the gospel is announced to the poor. And blessed is he who finds no cause for scandal in me! "

As they left, Jesus began to talk about John to the crowds: "What did you go to see in the desert? A cane whipped by the wind? So what did you go to see? A man dressed in luxury clothes? Here, those who wear luxury clothes are in the palaces of kings! Well, what did you go to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, indeed, more than a prophet. He is the one of whom it is written:

*Behold, I send my messenger before you,
in front of you he will prepare your way.*

In truth I tell you: among those born of women no one was born greater than John the Baptist; but the smallest in the kingdom of heaven is greater than him.



The Voice of the Parish Priest



Hearing to speak of the works of Christ not fully collimating with the identity of the strong and severe Messiah that he had traced, John sends his disciples to question Jesus. His answer is not: “Yes, I am the Messiah”. To define himself, Jesus does not extract the identity card, but invites us to look at his works. He almost said: “Look what I do and tell me who I am”. And, looking at his works, there are no demonstrations of irrefutable messianic power. Of course, some patients

recover, but the diseases are not eliminated.

If among the messianic works announced by the prophets there is also the release of prisoners, a dramatic question can be passed in the head of John: “What Messiah is the one who does not free me from prison?”

Sometimes the sick ask: “Jesus, divine doctor, did you forget about us?” Christ does not eliminate suffering with a portentous sponge, but takes it upon himself.



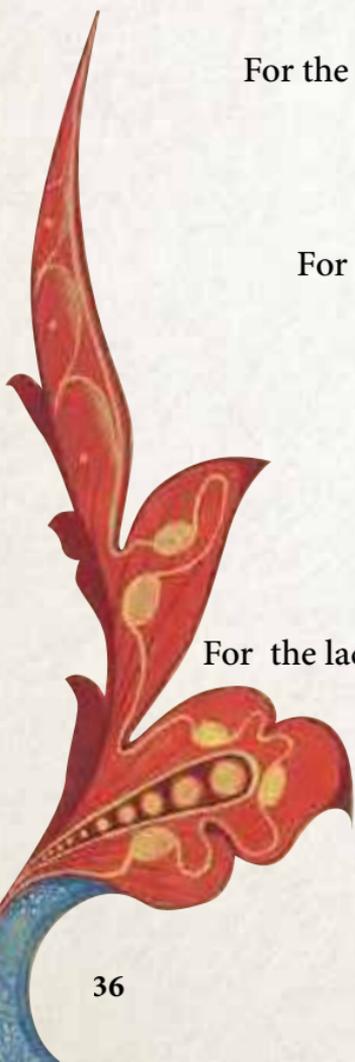
Prayer

For the questions we carry in our hearts,
You are the answer, Lord.

For the doubts that often come to us,
You are the answer, Lord.

For the fears that assail us,
You are the answer, Lord.

For the lack of sense of so many situations,
You are the answer, Lord.





Finally the calendar was ready. A nice slog, but it was worth it. The whole program of exams divided into bearable study units. Balanced. The hard part was preparing the way.

Then only tenacity and method were needed and not looking either right or left. To focus. It was worth it. If he succeeded, the world opened up. Or at least Europe. An Erasmus semester of new things, new people, new ideas, new flavors. A semester without the wake-up-run-stink routine of the train-who knows-riva-meter-classroom-back-who knows-rive-house. Free. Already he felt the wings in formation press them behind the shoulder blades. At each past examination they would have grown. Up to explain beautiful and white (perhaps with a fluorescent tip) and she, ready to fly away, to make the first taste of a future as an adult. She smiled to herself ... Telephone. Never relax.

"Yes, it's I ... Let me understand? Follow him all year? Where do I find the time? Just so you know I have three exams before December, which if I don't pass them Erasmus goodbye. And I have already given word in the brewery for a weekend and no, that I need the money, for Erasmus, if they take me in Holland. Or even in Germany. Always if I pass the exams. And I won't pass them if three, say, three afternoons a week, I'll go two hours away for ... I'm a kid, what's his name, Ali? No, Ahmed, who does not know Italian. I don't know Arabic. Ah, he speaks English. Arrived alone. Refugee. Parents died on the street. Usual. No, I'm not cynical. I mean that the adults make the mess and we put the patches. I think about it ... No, it's fine.



Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of Matthew
(21.24-25)*

Jesus answered them: "I will ask you one question only. If you answer me, I will also tell you with what authority I do this.

John's baptism where did it come from? From heaven or from men?"

They discussed among themselves saying: "If we say:" From heaven "; he will answer us:" Why then did you not believe?"

Many times Jesus answers with a question to the questions that are addressed to him. It is not a way of not responding, of escaping those who try to frame him. It is rather to trap the conscience

of its interlocutors to their responsibilities and to unmask their intentions. There are genuine questions, which seek an answer to be able to understand, and artificial questions, posed only to accuse.

Prayer

In the many questions of
the world,
**We are looking for you,
Lord.**

In the effort of believing,
**We are looking for you,
Lord.**

In the desire to trust us,
**We are looking for you,
Lord.**

Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of Matthew
(1.17)*

*Thus, all generations
from Abraham to David
are fourteen, from David
to the deportation to
Babylon, fourteen, from
deportation to Babylon to
Christ, fourteen.*

The generations from Abraham to Christ are three times fourteen. Some scholars note that three times fourteen equals six times seven. Seven is the number of God, perfection; you are that of man, imperfect. There are many of Jesus' very imperfect ancestors. Jesus, born in Mary immaculate, enters a lineage with many stains.

Prayer

Where we meet the
different generations,
**We thank you for the
family, Lord.**

Where we take care of
each other,
**We thank you for the
family, Lord.**

Where we learn to love
each other,
**We thank you for the
family, Lord.**

Sign of the cross

*From the Gospel of Matthew
(1.20-21)*

But while he was considering these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said to him: "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife. In fact the child that is generated in her comes from the Holy Spirit; she will give birth to a son and you will call him Jesus: he will in fact save his people from their sins"

Jesus is born of the Holy Spirit, but Joseph welcomes him as his own. The conception of Jesus is absolutely singular, but the task entrusted to Joseph is not so different from that of someone who receives, not

by adoption or by foster care. And we are all called, like Joseph, to recognize that each of our children is a gift of God, is essentially His.

Prayer

Like a dad for his baby,
You are our refuge.

In the desire for protection,
You are our refuge.

When we feel lost,
You are our refuge.

Sign of the cross

From the Gospel of Luke

(1.13)

But the angel said to him:

*“Fear not, Zechariah,
your prayer has been
heard and your wife*

*Elizabeth will give you a
son, and you will call him
John”.*

Why does Zechariah have to call John the son who is about to give him the old and sterile wife Elizabeth? Because John means “gift of God”. This son is a gift now so unexpected that Zachariah did not believe it possible. The true gift is not what we expect from Saint Lucia or whoever takes her place, corresponding to our requests. It is rather what is greater than our expectations.

Prayer

Which sometimes are different from our desires,
**We welcome your gifts,
Lord.**

Which we often do not know how to appreciate,
**We welcome your gifts,
Lord.**

What always amaze us,
**We welcome your gifts,
Lord.**

Sign of the cross

From the Gospel of Luke

(1.30)

*The angel said to her:
“Do not be afraid, Mary,
because you have found
favor with God”.*

Mary, full of grace, with her grace, with the beauty of her humility, fills the eyes and the heart of God: near him she finds grace. And in her the Holy Spirit gives us Jesus, who is the fullness of the Grace of God. Living in the grace of God means living with gratitude and gratuitously. This is why Jesus tells us: “You have received for free, you freely give”.

Prayer

We await you Jesus, King
of peace,
Come soon, Lord.

We await Jesus, the
strength of the weak,
Come soon, Lord.

We await you Jesus, sup-
port of our frailties
Come soon, Lord.

Sign of the cross

From the Gospel of Luke

(1.39-41)

In those days Mary got up and hurried to the mountainous region, in a city of Judah. Entering the house of Zechariah, she greeted Elizabeth. As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her lap. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Mary's presence arouses joy, which makes John exult in her mother's womb, and spreads the Holy Spirit, who fills Elizabeth. Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit: Elizabeth and John taste all its sweetness. We too can savor this fruit when in our meetings it lives far more than just formal courtesy, when concern and benevolence reign.

Prayer

When we can really meet each other,

Fill us with joy, Lord.

When we build good relationships,

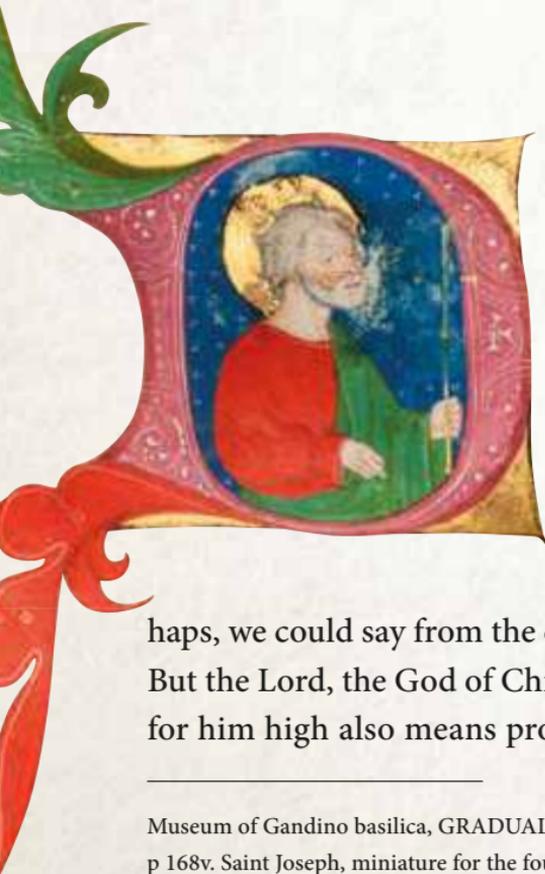
Fill us with joy, Lord.

When life surprises us,

Fill us with joy, Lord.

The Voice of the Word announces:

“**Fear not**”



Our Saint Joseph has his head raised and his eyelashes raised, like one who is listening to a voice that comes from above: indeed he knew how to listen to a voice that called him and that resounded from above. Or per-

haps, we could say from the depths of his conscience. But the Lord, the God of Christians does so to speak: for him high also means profound. Man listens pre-

Museum of Gandino basilica, GRADUALE,
p 168v. Saint Joseph, miniature for the fourth Sindy of Advent.

cisely to the heart that God has given him and not only with his ears.

Joseph's lips seem to hint at a smile. Of course, this smile becomes a sign that listening has already happened and that he has found peace. After the ordeal in front of reality - because he too has experienced a travail: it is so for everyone who believes -; after the struggle that he had to face between the rule of the Law and the action of the Spirit in history, here is that Joseph reaches a choice that leads him to inner peace. Yes, he will take Mary as his bride, he will recognize that son for whom he did nothing and who is a total gift to him.

You could interpret the stick that his left hand holds like an old man's stick - did you notice white hair? - and therefore as a tool to support his physical weakness. But we could also interpret it as the sign of the transformation that God has made in his life: from carpenter and bricklayer accustomed to remain a walker, beyond borders. And as a man with his intended path, as guide of the One who will be the Beautiful Shepherd; father of the One who will be the Way, the Truth and the Life (see John 14).

Sign of the cross

From the Gospel of Matthew (1, 18-24)



Thus was born Jesus Christ: his mother Mary, been betrothed to Joseph, before they went to live together found herself pregnant by the work of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her husband, since he was a just man and did not want to accuse her publicly, thought of repudiating her in secret. But while he was considering these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said to him: «Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife. In fact the child that is generated in her comes from the Holy Spirit; she will give birth to a son and you will call him Jesus: he will in fact save his people from their sins “.

All this happened because what was said by the Lord through the prophet was fulfilled:

Behold, the virgin will conceive and give birth to a son: he will be given the name of Emmanuel, which means God with us.

When he awoke from sleep, Joseph did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took his bride with him.



The Voice of the Parish Priest



The fear of making a wrong decision is one of the many fears we often face. The decision Joseph must make towards Mary is particularly difficult and delicate. Mary is pregnant and he isn't the father: to accuse her publicly or dismiss her in secret? While he is struggling with these thoughts, the Lord does not come to suggest to him how to remove his betrothed, but to ask him to take her with him. Joseph's initial fear was how to behave with Mary, but

the news that his girlfriend's pregnancy is the work of the Holy Spirit, if he resolves the paternity dilemma, puts him in a condition that, due to his exceptionality, can still intimidate him more. Go from a great one to a great fear. Only the word of the angel that invites him not to fear can infuse him with the strength and courage of faith, necessary to face this fear.



Prayer

When we don't know what to do,
We entrust our fears to you.

When we do not understand what is best for us
and for others,
We entrust our fears to you.

When everything seems bigger than us,
We entrust our fears to you.

When we feel alone,
We entrust our fears to you.



On February 16, 1999, the waves are between eight and twelve meters on the South Pacific Ocean, the weather marks a coming depression and the solo race Around Alone, from Charleston to Charleston, via Auckland and Cape

Town is in full swing, among the first is the Italian Giovanni Soldini, 33, with the Fila boat. The radio broadcast the news that the sailor boat, Isabelle Autissier, the PRB, has turned over somewhere in hell. The closest, which is also in the lead, is the French Thiercelin, which is only 33 miles from the Autissier, but has a damaged sail. At 133 nautical miles, it is John.

Ocean boats hermetically seal when turned upside down and those who are locked in can hold out for a while. Soldini reports that "For more than an hour I have been heading towards the Prb. The wind is at 30 knots but I won't leave the area until I find Isa". Isa and Giovanni are friends, they helped each other in the past too. Giovanni sails all night with the furious sea at 35 knots and before dawn, wet and frozen, he reaches the area to be explored, a square of 5 nautical miles. Soldini is the only hope for Autissier. But visibility is poor, a lot of skill and luck is needed, John is afraid of not finding it. It is 15 Italian time when Soldini sees the PRB. He walks around us, no signal, then he ties a hammer to a line and hits the hull. Isabelle opens the emergency door, gets on the life raft, Giovanni pulls her alongside and at 3.35 pm, Isa is safe on the Fila. Time to breathe and Giovanni returns to the race, heading for Cape Horn. That regatta will win it.



Sign of the cross

From the Gospel according to

Luke (1.66)

All those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, "What will this child be?" And indeed the hand of the Lord was with him.

Every child that is born is like a blank page on which we do not know what will be written. What will the hand of the Lord write in John's life? And in that of every newborn? It is not a question of fumbling between the expectation of good premonitions and the fear of bad omens, but of cultivating eyes capable of reading the unique and unrepeatable passage that the existence of each adds to the book of life.

Prayer

In every child that is born,
You are close, Lord.

In every mother who gives life,
You're close, Lord.

In every dad who welcomes his child,
You're close, Lord.

Sign of the cross

From the Gospel of Luke (1.68)

Blessed be the Lord, God of Israel, because he visited and redeemed his people. “

A visit that redeems is that which the Lord offers us in the birth of Jesus. The visit of thieves destroys and depreciates; that of Jesus, instead, fixes us and enriches us. It is the doctor's visit, who treats us; of the Friend, who accepts us as we are but sincerely advises and corrects us; of the Newborn, who proposes to us the arduous task of caring for him and gives us the great joy of being able to embrace him.

Prayer

In our days,
We look forward to seeing you, Lord.

In the people who are close to us,
We look forward to seeing you, Lord.

In the future that awaits us,
We look forward to seeing you, Lord

The Voice of the Word announces:

**“A savior is
born for you!”**



Mary is so big that she overtakes the size of the hut where the Child was born. Beato Angelico had also frescoed (1440-1450) in the convent of San Marco in Florence, an annunciation in which Mary is so large that, if she could have raised it, she would have

broken through the arches of the porch and the roof of the house where the angel reached her. Neither the great artist nor the illuminator made the wrong measures be-

Historical Archive of the Diocese of Bergamo, Ancient books collection, CORALE
3 - yet Clergy's Library n.276, f. 70r. Nativity, miniature for Christmas Day.

cause of the incompetence of the trade but to take us to the true center of everything: She with Jesus, the Child she holds in her hands. The mystery of the Incarnation: God who makes so much space in himself for man to take his own features, to share his own bodily and historical, fragile and passionate being. Behind Mary there is Saint Joseph who seems to watch with a serious expression: it is really not something easy to understand and accept this mystery. In the background there is the hut with the donkey and the ox that, after heating the baby, can now use the manger for what is its function, even if no one, from now on, will be able to forget that for one night it was the cradle of the King of the universe.

Humble and tiny, on the right, for us who look at the image, there are the shepherds: they are small, kneeling and with folded hands. Truly, before God who becomes small, we humans can only recognize ourselves as small and weak without fear; all that remains is to recognize ourselves in need of being saved. The clasped hands have precisely the meaning of self-surrender as we are, in everything and for everything, in the hands of God: the little shepherds give themselves to the Child who is the Eternal, present fact in history. Paradoxically, the humility of God is such a great thing that it is the revelation of its transcendence: indeed its logic is so very different from our logic!

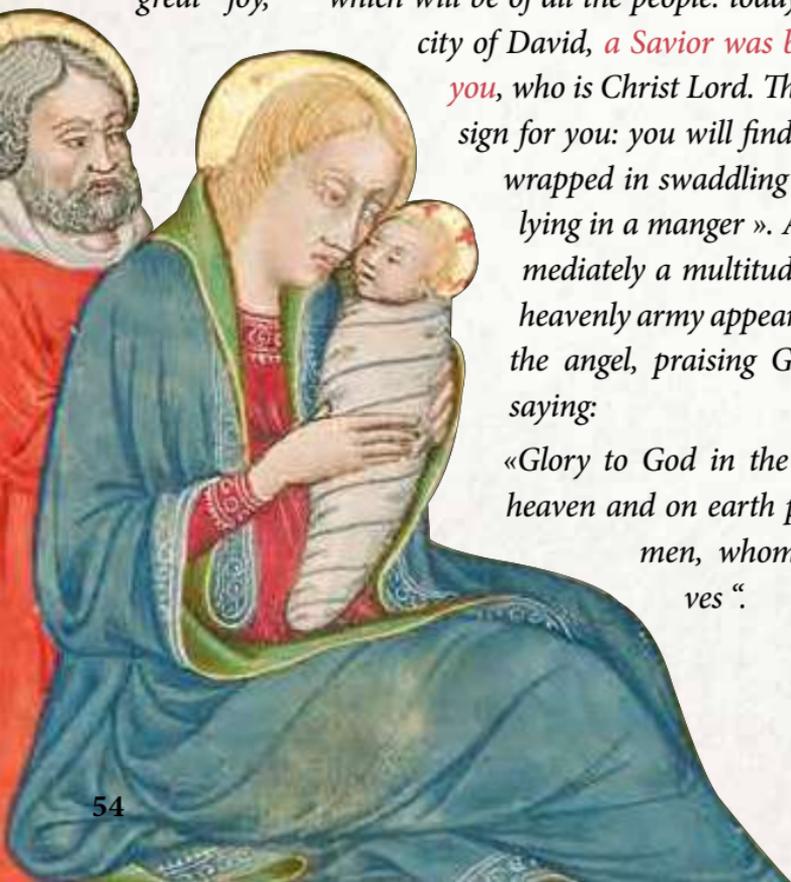
Sign of the cross

From the Gospel of Luke (2, 1-14)

In that region there were some shepherds who, sleeping outdoors, kept watch all night keeping watch over their flock. An angel of the Lord presented himself to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were filled with great fear, but the angel said to them: “Fear not: behold, I announce to you a great joy,

*which will be of all the people: today, in the city of David, **a Savior was born for you**, who is Christ Lord. This is the sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger ». And immediately a multitude of the heavenly army appeared with the angel, praising God and saying:*

«Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to men, whom he loves «.





The Voice of the Parish Priest



A great joy for all the people is announced by the angels to the shepherds. A joy that unites all is not very common among us. We often rejoice for a victory against someone, and therefore it is a joy not for everyone, because the loser is certainly not happy. And we are so bad that sometimes we even enjoy someone's defeat, for the sole reason that we dislike it: perverse satisfaction for the defeat of others. The joy that springs from

the birth of Jesus is, instead, offered to all, it is not against anyone and it is not just for someone. Earthly pleasure is winning by defeating, the heavenly joy is that the losers win not against someone, but against Evil / Evil, who threatens to defeat us all. The joy of God is to raise the humble, to fill the hungry with goods, to console those who weep, to satisfy those who are hungry and thirsty for justice ...



Prayer

The earth, the sky and the sea rejoice because,
You have become a man.

The nations and every people rejoice because,
You have become a man.

My family, my community rejoice because,
You have become a man.





I work as a lawyer, with moderate success. I am able to keep my mind clear and focused, and it is very useful in my work. I haven't always been that way though.

I was in elementary school when my parents told me and my sister that a new baby sister would be born. I was really furious! We didn't need another sister, we were already fine! The intruder would only take time away from the mother to stay with us. They were thoughts driven by fear, of course. One day my parents went to the hospital for a checkup. My dad told me: "Today I'll call you at school, if there's any news." I didn't understand and I just forgot about it when I got to class. At one point, the caretaker knocked: "Who is Marta? They call her on the answering machine, there is her dad on the phone. "In the answering machine, when I picked up the receiver, I heard my dad's voice saying:" Your little sister was born! All right, when you come home we go to say goodbye. "Hearing this good news, I no longer thought I was at school, and that I had to behave myself. I didn't even feel angry. I was just happy. I screamed loudly: "she was born!" And I ran in the classroom, skipping the steps two by two. I threw open the door, startling the teacher. "She's born! My sister was born!" At that moment the janitor arrived, a little out of breath. "Excuse me, ma'am, the little girl screamed something and ran away, I couldn't stop her." happy. "But the caretaker also smiled.



The Voice of the Word announces:

**“ They saw the child
and worshipped him ”**



In the midst of a sky that looks like a flowery garden of stars, there is one that appears dark to us but was probably made of gold. It is located right above the house of Mary, Joseph and the Child Jesus. It was the

signpost, the sign par excellence of the coming of the Savior for those foreign pilgrims who had in their hearts the search for a meaning and the desire for a meeting.

Now they have come, noble because they are kings of

Historical Archive of the Diocese of Bergamo, Ancient books collection, CORALE 13 - yet Clergy's Library n.276, f. 112r. Adoration of the Magi, miniature for Epiphany.

some distant kingdom, full of high dignity because they are moved by the search for the true King of the Jews, the Other who comes to meet. Here they are with their gifts - only one is seen from the shape of an ancient ciborium and bright yellow like gold - full of wonder and respect. The older one, with little hair and white hair, has already removed the crown and knelt down. The other two seem to encourage each other to recognize the child and to imitate the first one. Offer and kneel: what else to do? Offer what one has because God has already offered his Son who is the gift par excellence, a gift that cannot be more than this. Kneeling because there is no human strength that can confront the helpless power of love that shows itself in the Child of Bethlehem.

The faces of the three wise men recall a theme that can give us a further opportunity for prayer and meditation: one is a young person, the other is an adult and, finally, the last - who was the first to kneel - is an old man. They represent the ages of life. We are called to bow - in the ideality and exuberance of youth; in the fertility and strength of adulthood; in the fragility and wisdom of old age - to find in the heart the desire of meeting with Him and to abandon ourselves to his plan of salvation for every man.

Sign of the cross

From the Gospel of Luke (2, 1-14)

Herod, secretly called the Magi, made them say exactly the time when the star appeared and sent them to Bethlehem saying: «Go and inquire carefully about the child and, when you have found it, let me know, because also “I come to worship him”. When they heard the king they left. And behold, the star, which they had seen sprouting, preceded them, until it came and stood over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they experienced great joy. Entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, they prostrated themselves and worshi-

ped him. Then they opened their treasure chests and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.





The Voice of the Parish Priest



Let us imagine in the heart of the Magi this liturgical chant as they open their treasures: “Lord, welcome our gifts in this mysterious encounter between our poverty and your greatness. We offer you the things that you yourself have given us and you, in return, give us yourself”. The Magi donate gold, frankincense and myrrh to the child Jesus and receive in return himself, his living presence. Giving to receive: as in the mystery of every meeting in which the “rich”, giving

something to the “poor”, finds himself with the most empty pockets, but with a fuller heart. The Magi offer their riches to the king of the Jews who, being a child, is fragile and poor, and in the opening of their treasures the mysterious encounter between their poverty and His greatness is realized. God gives himself to us in Jesus, who as a rich man became poor for us, so that we might become rich through his poverty.



Prayer

What envelops our lives,
You are the light, Lord.

What we want to follow in our journey,
You are the light, Lord.

What lights up when we're in the dark,
You are the light, Lord.

What shines for every person,
You are the light, Lord.





I worked in a small print shop, which ended in 2009 with the crisis. I've been looking for another job for months, without finding it. Meanwhile, even though I was careful, what little I had left was gone. I started attending soup kitchen to get the rent money. In the end there was nothing left and I ended up in the street. I'm not from Milan and I didn't have friends to ask for a hand. And I'm over 30, I wouldn't have come back to that country. During the day I sought work or took refuge in libraries. If you are clean and dressed in a dignified way, it all seems like before, people treat you well, you are a citizen, girls smile at you and everyone treats you with respect. But in the evening I would lay my sleeping bag in sheltered places in the center, where perhaps I had spent the morning with my backpack on my shoulder. But if you're on the street sleeping, people look different. In fact, he doesn't look at you at all. Become urban furniture, almost invisible. It's strange. I felt the same as before, but for others I was not. It lasted a couple of months. One night I found a place in a dormitory. Little by little relationships were born, they showed me a day center and there, for a project, they needed someone who could print. So now I work for them and I'm no longer on the road. Because someone recognized me as a specific person, who had qualities: he finally saw me as I really was.



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