

The Solemnity of Nativity of the Lord: Christmas: Come to Jesus

“O Come All Ye Faithful, Joyful and Triumphant, Come Ye O Come Ye to Bethlehem.” Our Christmas liturgies most often begin with this beautiful hymn. We are called to be faithful, joyful and triumphant. We are called to celebrate the central event of humankind, the Christ Event. God has entered human history as one of us. He has come to destroy the grip of sin. He has come to restore spiritual life.

So we return to Bethlehem to find Mary and Joseph with their newborn son, our newborn Savior. Some people say that they were homeless, but they weren't. They just didn't have a place to stay. Joseph was a carpenter. He could afford a room, only there was no room available in the Inn; so the stable had to do. I'm sure he was devastated that he couldn't provide better for Mary and Jesus. But they had all they needed. They had each other. They had love. They had God in the center of their love. The birth of a child should be celebrated. But Joseph and Mary were far away from their relatives. Who would celebrate their child? Then the shepherds came telling their story of angels singing "Glory to God on High," Joseph knew that God was in control. Jesus' birth was celebrated greater than any child ever born. And it still is.

Please join me in a meditation on the celebration.

O Come, all ye faithful! Come all you who are grieving. Come all ye who cringe at the thought of an empty place at the table this year. Come to Bethlehem, the City of Bread, and know that a day will come when you will sit with your loved ones at the Banquet of the Lord.

O Come, all ye faithful! Come you who are sick with chronic ailments. Come before the One who heals. Know that when you are with him you are only physically ill. Know that when you are before the Christ child, you are spiritually strong.

O Come, all ye faithful! Come all you who have pain in your family. Come you who are suffering from a marriage that is in trouble. Come you who are dealing with adult children who are more aggressive than loving. Come before the Holy Family. Come and pray that their love might reignite the love of your family.

O Come, all ye faithful. Come you who are elderly and waiting for what is next. Come you who fear that this might be your last Christmas. Come before the One who is eternal and know that you have only begun to number your Christmas celebrations.

O Come, all ye faithful. Come you who are poor. Come you who are in pain that you cannot provide more for your family. Come to the stable where the best that Joseph could do for his family is provide a manger for their baby. Come and realize that your family needs nothing more than love.

O Come, all ye faithful. Come you who are poor in your riches. Come all you who try to buy happiness. Come and worship before the source of all joy. Come and

find the pearl that is beyond all price. Come before Jesus.

O Come, all ye faithful. Come you who fear for the future of our country. Come before the King and pray for our country and our world. Come to Bethlehem, the City of David, David the King. Come and remember that our citizenship lies in heaven.

O Come, all ye faithful. Come all you who are fighting addictions. Come before the only one who knows your struggles, who hurts for you and with you. Come to Bethlehem before the One who will always pick you up so that you can fall on your knees before Him.

O Come all ye faithful. Come all you sinners, all us sinners. Come before the One who was born to forgive. Weak and weary sinners, Come to Jesus. Weak and weary world, Come to Jesus.

O Come all ye faithful. Experience the One who has come for you, for us. Wisdom has come. Wisdom, the Holy Word of God, who governs all creation with his strong yet tender care. He has come to show his people the way to salvation.

O Come, all ye faithful. O Come before Wisdom. Wisdom has come to help us find the way to God through a world that continually puts barriers to his presence. Wisdom has come to help us remove the barriers that we have constructed around ourselves and around others. Wisdom has come to show us the way, His way.

O Come, all ye faithful. O Come before Adonai, the Lord of Ancient Israel, who showed himself to Moses in the burning bush, who gave him the holy law on Sinai Mountain. He and he alone can set us free from the pagan world and all its empty promises.

O Come, all ye faithful. O come before the flower of Jesse's stem. Come before he who has been raised up as a sign for all peoples. Come before our Savior, our Messiah. Come before the One who shows the world the love our God has for his people, a love that is realized in a child in a stable, in a man on a cross, in a people living in hope.

O Come, all ye faithful. Come before he who is the Keystone of the mighty arch of man. The keystone of an arch is the rock that balances the weight of the rocks of the sides of the arch. The keystone is also the fixed point of the arch. God is the fixed point of the universe. He is the one who keeps the universe from caving in upon itself. He is the one who has come to prevent us from destroying ourselves. He, the Almighty One, has come to save a creature made from dust. He has come to give us peace.

O Come, all ye faithful. Come before Emmanuel. Emmanuel means, God-is-with-us. The great yearning of humankind is to once more share the intimate presence of God lost in the Garden of Eden. The great yearning of mankind is to live

with meaning, with purpose, with God. He has come. Emmanuel has come!

O Come, all ye faithful. Come and celebrate, for there is nothing that the world can do that can prevent us from celebrating the birth that gives meaning to all life.

O Come, all ye faithful. Come before Jesus, born to a Virgin in Bethlehem.

Let's conclude with Chris Rice's beautiful *Come to Jesus*

Weak and wounded sinner, lost and left to die
Oh, raise your head, for love is passing by
Come to Jesus, come to Jesus, come to Jesus and live

Now your burden's lifted and carried far away
And precious blood has washed away the stain
So, sing to Jesus, sing to Jesus, sing to Jesus and live

And like a newborn baby, don't be afraid to crawl
And remember when you walk sometimes we fall
So, fall on Jesus, fall on Jesus, fall on Jesus and live

Sometimes the way is lonely and steep and filled with pain
So, if your sky is dark and pours the rain
Then, cry to Jesus, cry to Jesus, cry to Jesus and live

Oh, and when the love spills over and music fills the night
And when you can't contain your joy inside
Then, dance for Jesus, dance for Jesus, dance for Jesus and live

And with your final heartbeat, kiss the world goodbye
Then go in peace, and laugh on Glory's side
And fly to Jesus, fly to Jesus, fly to Jesus and live.

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God bless you all, and Merry Christmas!