

# Christmas Is Here!

by Bro FRANCESCO DILEO OFM Cap.



Christmas is almost now upon us, the feast that brings our families together, our children in the magic of giving and our grandparents who become again like children. It is a time of light, an infinity of lights that illuminate the longest nights of the year. It is a time of faith that melts the hardest of hearts with the warmth and tenderness of a Child who rests not on a soft wool mattress but on the rough straw of a stable. Christmas is a time of joy, care and sharing, but above all it is a spiritual call to a more simple and essential life-style, concentrated on a "beyond" that was opened to us thanks to Christ's sacrifice offered up in the fullness of time in the region of Bethlehem and Jerusalem. However, for us Christians – priests, religious and laity – called to share in Jesus's ultimate sacrifice offered up for our redemption, Christmas is also a commitment, to spread the good news of salvation, to make known the Gospel of the Incarnation, as prerequisite and

prelude to the Gospel of the Paschal mystery.

Our holy fellow friar Saint Pio wrote: "Jesus used His angels to call the poor and simple shepherds to manifest Himself to them and He called the wise men through their own learning. Both were moved by the inspiration of His spiritual grace and hurried to Him, to adore Him" (Letters IV), indicating in that way the first two testimonies of the Christian message, that equated a group of simple shepherds and three wise men in a single great mission, and in advance of the Apostles, in announcing God's Love, who out of love for man became man in order to raise him to the Divine. In fact, the shepherds: "When they saw... they made known the message that had been told them about this Child" (Lk 2,17), while the three Magi "departed for their country" (Mt 2,12), where they very likely, as the Syriac Infancy Gospel suggests, recounted what they had heard and seen.

That mission however, has not and cannot remain the pre-

rogative of the shepherds and the Magi alone and neither of the bishops and the clergy whose mandate was prior to the Ascension. Every baptised person must recognise their calling in spreading the Gospel. This is why Padre Pio continued after his words above: "(Jesus) calls all of us by His divine inspirations and communicates with us through His grace. How many times has He not lovingly invited us to Him, too? And how have we responded?" (Letters IV).

We too, are invited to prayer and adoration before this great mystery of the Son of God's incarnation and that is celebrated in the sacred liturgy in this time.

Let us prepare then, the beautiful and ancient tradition of the crib of the Holy Family in our homes, but most especially in our hearts and prayers.

*A very happy, peaceful and blessed Christmas to everyone!♥*

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