

REFLECT

December 2020



Creche in Brussels Grand Place

Christmas Musings

Christmas time beckons us, spiritual pilgrims,
to turn to our contemplative side,
to re-enter the high and low points of 2020.
Wisdom helps us look at our lives inside and out.
We may be awed at our depth of insight,
We may be bogged down by our frailty.
Yet God calls us to enter his presence freely and confidently.

Like Mary, favored by God,
We remember our first yes.
The yes that still challenges us
to break open the Word,
to move forward,
to deepen our roots,
to find the new life in Christ
that awaits us in his coming
at Christmas.

In union with our sisters and
brothers worldwide,
we pray,

*"GLORY BE TO GOD WHOSE POWER, WORKING IN US,
CAN DO INFINITELY MORE THAN WE CAN ASK OR IMAGINE."
Eph. 3:20*

Sr. Jane Quinlan, OSU

"We prepare the way of the Lord by turning away from the wandering path of selfish attachments and walking the straight path of divine love." Glen Argan **Living with Christ** Reflection for December 6.

An Uncharted path

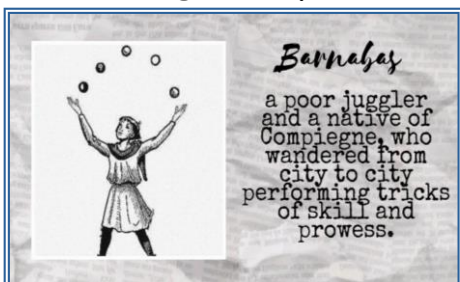
At times like this, with Covid taking front stage,
Who can be indifferent?
Who can pretend it's not real?
Who can refrain from praying?
No one may hear our prayer,
But God who charts our path
in and out of dark forests,
along new or worn paths,
knows where it all leads
and how long we have to wait
for Covid's grip to loosen.

As we wait during Advent,
keeping our distance,
hoping for normal time's return,
we trust the markers along the way
believing they hold God's secret plan
for us, his children.

Sr. Jane Quinlan, OSU

A Christmas parable

One of the most simple stories pertaining to Christmas is the story of *Our Lady's Juggler*. It is a beautiful short story by Anatole France a monk, who shares his gift with the Virgin Mary.



The lessons from the story of Barnaby, the juggler of our Lady, is applicable to everyone who thinks that he/she is untalented and that he/she does not matter. The story is a reminder to all of us that each one has a talent that if used can light up the life of many people.

Many centuries ago, there lived a man by the name of Barnaby. He was a juggler who lived from day to day on the small donations he received.

One day on his travels he was passing a huge monastery and he started to think and pray. Maybe, if they let me enter this monastery, I can do the most menial tasks, do something positive and save my soul and have more meaning and happiness in my life. He went to the door and talked with the abbot who was touched by Barnaby's simple faith and allowed him to join the monastery. Barnaby was soon discouraged, however, feeling he had very little to offer compared to the other monks. They had so many gifts and used these to glorify their God.

Christmas was coming closer. And he asked himself what was he doing but the most menial jobs in the monastery. He knew how the brothers of the monastery were preparing for the coming of Christ. They had so many gifts and used these to glorify their God. One brother was writing a new musical score for the midnight Mass. Another brother was making special bread to be given to the poor on Christmas Day. Another brother was making a beautiful Christmas crib for

the birth of the Christ Child. Barnaby, in seeing what was done by others so talented, felt more inadequate than ever. His sense of his own inferiority became painful and he was discouraged, feeling he had very little to offer compared to the other monks.

And then he thought of juggling with balls before the image of the Holy Virgin. He stood in front of the statue of Our Blessed Mother and gave her the only talent he had, the art of juggling. At that moment something extraordinary happened. The statue of our Blessed Mother almost came alive with a radiance that Barnaby had never seen before. When the monks came into the Chapel they saw Barnaby juggling with joy and happiness.

The monks were surprised by what they saw. And at that moment, the Holy Virgin descended from the altar and wiped the sweat from the juggler's forehead. The monks at once recognized that the simple-hearted were blessed with a unique gift, allowing them to come close to God. This man who thought he had so little talent had brought joy to Mary, the Mother of Christ, at Christmas time.



The lessons from the story of Barnaby on the virtues of humble simplicity are a reminder to all of us that each one has a talent that if used, can light up the life of many people. You don't have to do extravagant things to give praise to God.

Are we ready and willing to share our gifts even if they may seem strange and if others do not understand?



Life is a lesson; we learn and continue to learn every day



Food items distribution on the occasion of Indigenous people's Day on 9th August

The situation we are living in is an unforeseen time in everyone's life across the country; irrespective of poor & rich, caste, creed, religion, sex, young or old; no one is left untouched. Millions of people have faced severe hardships since the start of the Covid - 19 Pandemic. We are left with a great deal of uncertainty. Uncertainty of how contagious the virus is and about the best way to treat it; uncertainty of how long our personal immunity will last after we get infected and about the vaccine and proper treatment; uncertainty about the future of the economy and whether the jobs will still be there for those who lost and unemployed youth ; uncertainty about how long the public quarantines should continue ; uncertainty about opening of our educational institutions, opening of worshipping places, movements and

gathering, uncertainty about what will happen to ourselves, ministries, families and friends .

In the midst of so many uncertainties we naturally look for something firm to hold onto, namely the Supreme power our creator. We got connected with each other and were moved to care for the great multitude of poor migrants and economically weak. They were fed, treated and were reached home safely. It gave us an ample opportunity to renew ourselves personally, spiritually, physically and psychologically. We were encouraged to think outside the box and be created in our routine religious lives. We came out of our comfort zone to do kind deeds to the suffering humanity -in serving the migrant laborers in the shelter home and other charitable works; like distribution of food articles, clothing and other petty needs in the communities along with the local church. It gave us an inner joy, peace and satisfaction to live the General Chapter theme "Lead a New Life Rooted in Christ".

There is an old saying "There is good in every evil". This is a simple short sentence, but still so powerful. This gives us hope to see beyond the finish line and look forward for better tomorrow to start new life. I strongly believe that this unexpected time has drawn each one of us closer to God and made us spiritually strong. We tried to find ourselves and realized who we are. We are brought face to face with the most basic question of life in this time of crisis. What is it that we truly

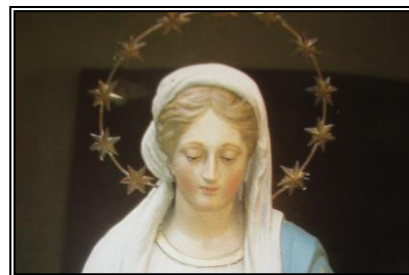
cherish and radiate the same in the time of dismay and pain in the world? What am I challenged with to lead a new life in this present situation?

We tried to do things we never tried before. We had time for each other, for prayers, contemplation and sharing. We found time to read many books. We learned to stay tuned with online Mass and online classes. The situation taught us many things. Above all it taught us to love, to listen, to care, to respect, to help and to be grateful to God at all times. Today we are invited to live life joyfully and appreciate what we are and we have to fight Covid-19.

Sr. Ritu Ranjita Kindo, OSU

Handmaid of the Lord

Years ago I heard Catherine Doherty, the Baroness de Heuck, the foundress of Madonna House in Canada speak. She told us that we must become "pregnant with Christ". I had never heard such an incredible statement.



This wooden statue of the Virgin Mary is from the 15th century. It belongs to the Carmelites of Brussels and represents "the woman crowned with twelve stars" (Apoc. 12,1)

Every year during the Advent season, I contemplate this Gospel scene where the angel comes to Mary to deliver the message that she will become pregnant with the Son of God and how this was a pivotal moment that changed Mary's life and the course of history. I follow Mary as she goes to share the good news with her cousin Elizabeth. I listen to her as she tells the story to the shepherds and then later accepts the gifts brought by wise men from the east. I wonder what she thought and how she felt with all these unusual events.

She prayed but how did she pray? Did she pray for understanding of the significance of these events?

Did she keep renewing her acceptance, "I am the handmaid of the Lord let what you have said be done to me "

Then I wonder how I can be more like Mary, how can I bear Christ and bring Him to the world? How can I be more accepting of the events, or turn of events in my world? I pray for understanding and for the gifts of the shepherd and wise men. I wonder how I can fit into the scenes of this gospel filled with opportunity and meaning and bring Him to a world that is so in need of His love.

Sr. Margaret Golub, OSU

Living during the Pandemic

This is how we are living, on a spiritual level, the period of the Covid-19 pandemic. This year we should have the General Chapter whose theme is: **Live a new life rooted in Christ!**

The confinement allowed us to deepen this theme personally and in community, because we had a lot of time to spend together in silence, prayer and sharing.

We have learned to know each other better and to appreciate each other. Being together at home, we added the midday prayer, the Rosary of Mercy at 3 pm and evening worship. Our prayer was more universal: for the Pope and all the Pastors who needed the strength and the light of the Holy Spirit at this crucial time; for the sick and those who have died from Covid-19, for the Governors, for our vulnerable students and collaborators, for our General Chapter, etc.

In addition, we have organized recollection days among us and the sharing of spiritual books we have read. We also took advantage of this forced time off from our school activities to learn new liturgical songs. Our chapel (Kambove) was open to Christians who wanted to participate in our daily and Sunday Eucharist.

The bells in our churches ring at 6 a.m., 12 p.m. and 8 p.m. to invite Christians to family prayer.

Since the lifting of the lockdown, our churches have been full on Sundays, so the priests have added hours of worship so people can keep a distance. Some parishes celebrate the Eucharist in the schoolyard in order to provide space for everyone. We give thanks to God for the faith of Christians, which has not wavered despite several months without Mass or the Sacraments. So we can say with St. Thérèse that all is grace!

At school (CACAM), before the lockdown and before the pandemic was declared in the DRC, we sensitized the students to pray and make sacrifices for our brothers

and sisters of the world who were suffering because of Covid-19.

Each had her turn to pray aloud for this intention, in front of her companions.

We also showed them how to protect themselves against this disease. Thank goodness we have not had any illness or death among us. The negative impact while being confined was that we could not fulfill our mission as educators and transmit to our students and collaborators our charism which is the fullness of life in Christ. Some young girls dropped out of school and got married early. Don't we say that idleness is the mother of all vices?

Sr. Pétronille Chibelushi, OSU



*May we all have a Blessed healthy Christmas
and a New Year filled with peace.*

