



# Christmas

*Chapter*  
*2008*

***AND THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH AND DWELT  
AMONG US***

The Incarnation is a mystery to contemplate and emulate. In today's world there are so many challenges to becoming more human. But challenges can become invitations. We can certainly grow in humanity through advocating more economic, political and social solidarity. We can grow in humanity through a greater openness to the "other", to difference which doesn't automatically engender separation, exclusion, or violence. Our societies are multicultural and pluri-religious. How can we live our "plurality" as richness in humanity and not threat? We can become more human through prayer not as a "refuge in times of panic" or as an "evasion" in the face of our responsibilities, (Card Etchegarray in Lebanon on 15 August 2006) but as an expression of the ground of our being as human. Doesn't our Consecrated Life lead us in all these directions of humanization?

## **To become more human through faith and obedience**

In reflecting on the Nativity scene, we recall perhaps Mary's question, "How can this be because I am a virgin?" In this Christmas Chapter I'd like to highlight Joseph's implicit question in Matthew's account of the Messiah's birth, "Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly." (Matt.1:19) How to handle himself and his own attachment to the law in view of his fiancée's pregnancy?

Joseph found his answer not in the Law, but in a prophecy. Being a man of deep faith and humility, he remained open to a God who planned to save his people from their sins, through the fulfillment of a prophecy: *Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel.* Joseph listened to an angel of the Lord in a dream and *did as the angel commanded him; he took Mary as wife.* It sounds so simple in the sober expression of Matthew's Gospel. We know from our own experience in daily life that Joseph's singleness of purpose is far from easy. And yet that is what is proposed, a proposition exemplified in Marie Eugenie's life and her single vision: *In the Assumption All is from Jesus Christ, All belongs to Jesus Christ, All must be for Jesus Christ.*

Questioning the Spirit, the Scriptures, the Church, our own source texts and GC documents needs to be part of our lives. Seeking answers in these places to contemporary and personal situations opens us to new ventures in "incarnation" and in becoming more human, in growing in wisdom and in grace.

It is perhaps this human attitude of questioning, as did Mary and Joseph, which is most appropriate in the actuality of today's economic and financial crisis as well as in the complexity of a world where dreams of survival, power and wealth more often than not clash and lead to hostility and violence.

On the word of an angel, Joseph moved forward with Mary and the Child through the maze which the flight into Egypt must have represented. It is striking how many scenes of the Nativity Gospels seem so actual today. So much so, that we can ask ourselves how these present-day migrations and flights are affecting us? And the world economic crisis? What repercussions in our lives? Or are we too isolated for them to touch us? Where are we and our communities looking for direction and meaning in these troubled times?

This Christmas, I would like to encourage you to contemplate God's pedagogy in the Incarnation and to respond with Joseph's singleness of purpose and faith. May your response allow you and our world to become more fully human according to God's desire. So many wander in the darkness of night seeking shelter. It was undoubtedly Joseph who knocked at those numerous doors before finding refuge in a cave with Mary, his pregnant wife.

Let us give voice to the world's cry this Christmas using the words of the psalmist,

*Open to me the gates of righteousness,  
That I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.  
(Ps.117 (118):19)*

Through our prayer and consecrated lives, let us become more human in our own relationships with persons and things, so that the world and all it contains, all its systems of governance and finance become more fully humanized.

We pray with and for one another. May all experience a blessed and joyous Christmas and a peace-filled New Year 2009!

