

she had decided. His advice: The essential is to begin... and to be humble. **Humility** is another lesson from the Christmas story. Communities ceaselessly begin again: new compositions, new school years, new pastoral projects, and new apostolic and community projects. They are generally times of enthusiasm. But they can also be times of discouragement when routine has set in. It's then that a certain dose of humility and courage is needed.

Scripture invites us to remain constantly in a state of desire⁷. Who says desire says beginning again. Our PGC in Abidjan did essentially that. In it we named our desires as a congregation. Now, the final message reminds us, *we are called to take decisions in view of the future. New beginnings...*

I would like to end this Christmas Chapter with a quote from the back cover of a book entitled, *Tiempo de Crear. (A Time to Create)* The reflection inspired me. I hope it does the same for you.

To contemplate is to discover God in the depths of reality and in the depths of the divisions which cut through nations as well as persons today. God is not inactive like a remote spectator. He is committed and involved, bringing life out of the "chaos" and the "abyss" as on creation's first day.

*God's love for our world isn't finished nor his creative fantasy exhausted. **What newness does God offer us today in order to go on creating with Him?** God is always ready to begin anew whatever we have left unfinished in a project, a phrase, a pardon or an embrace⁸.*

Sr. Diana Wauters, Superior General
Christmas Chapter, November 16, 2009

⁷ Chrétien, Jean-Louis, *La Joie Spacieuse*, Minuit 2002, p.52

⁸ Buelta Gonzalez, Benjamin, sj, *Tiempo de Crear*, Sal Terrae, Santander 2009



« SAY TO THOSE WHO ARE OF A FEARFUL HEART:
BE STRONG, DO NOT FEAR! HERE IS YOUR GOD »

Many long to hear those words¹ and to believe in them. We have this gift of faith and so I invite you in this Christmas Chapter to read and meditate together the fulfillment of the Oracle of Isaiah as given to us in the Christmas Gospels².

*And she gave birth to her firstborn son
And wrapped him in bands of cloth,
And laid him in a manger,
Because there was no place for them in the inn.*

Instead of commenting the **birth of Christ** this year, I'd like us to contemplate the nativity narratives and consider this marvelous happening as the **birth of a new family**. We might even say the first "Christian" community was born: Jesus, the child, Mary, his mother and Joseph. *When the Son of God descended upon the earth, immediately a new family was born.*³

There are important things for us to learn from these stories. This earthly "trinity" was certainly a place of discernment and decision. Joseph undoubtedly talked over with Mary his plan to find shelter for her and her unborn child after they were refused more conventional lodging. Surely their need to flee into Egypt was also pondered and discussed. This little community was not isolated, but entered into dialogue with shepherds and kings alike. Here was a community where the deep and mysterious vocation of Mary to motherhood and virginity was accepted even if not fully understood. It doesn't take much imagination to see that it was a place of prayer and silence. The profound communion in this community indeed reflected the face of the triune God. **Here is your God.**

¹ Isaiah 35 :4

² Year B

³ St. Jérôme, *Lettre XXII, 21 à Eustochium*

My emphasis on community this Christmas stems from the call we heard at the PGC to deepen this aspect of our consecrated life. In a text⁴ that we will be sending to you to deepen we read how our communities must mirror God's Face for our contemporaries. *Fraternal life, where consecrated persons strive to live in Christ « with one heart and soul » (Ac4 :32) proclaims the Trinity in a rich and meaningful manner*⁵. Our credibility as community of Jesus rests on our internal communion..⁶

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*And the Word became flesh
And lived **among us**.*

In his Gospel John puts the accent on the Word's presence and birth into our **human community**. He came to stay and indeed has stayed **among us** both in the Eucharist and in the Church. In considering these lines in John's Gospel we can think about how we situate ourselves **as community** in our surroundings (neighborhood, school, parish, social center etc), one group in the midst of so many others. All have messages some more salutary than others. I quote again from the work of the commission on the Rule of Life concerning our fraternal life and its place among our brothers and sisters. *By the simple fact of its existence, the religious community is already a sign. It can be a true witness and **sign of hope** for the world. **Here is your God.***

The Christmas story is a **story about beginnings**. We have them all throughout our personal lives. They are essential as the great spiritual master, Francis de Sales says to his penitent, Mademoiselle de Soufour when she was desperate because she couldn't manage to love the poor as

⁴ Travail de la Commission Règle de Vie, La Vie Fraternelle en Communauté

⁵ VC 21

⁶ Paredes, J. Garcia, CMF, *Teologia de la Vida Religiosa*, , 2002, p.186