



The baby Jesus greets you today - I wonder - what Name will He reveal to us this Christmastide? It is so very timely, now when the world is full of woe and distress. In just such a time like now, we need a firm foundation, and His Name makes it known to us.

The Holy Spirit gave us a real picture for decorating the front altar of our chapel this year. Little did we know that He was revealing to us how He wants to come to us.

Together we focus on the prophetic word, "*See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you*" (Isaiah 60:2 NIV). Darkness is certainly increasing worldwide.

In 1979 many Sisters were about to go abroad and Mother Basilea spoke of the islands of light the Lord is looking for in a sea of sin. As we come to celebrate Christmas during another wave of the pandemic we were reminded of a colour print by Renate Roer depicting the Bethlehem scene on a tiny island surrounded by severe disasters and destruction. The only safe place was around the manger. There embedded in flowers on a small island, lay the Child of Hope and Wisdom, who alone offers security in a scary world and can show us a way through the destruction that can surround us on all sides.



We are privileged to see that the darker it gets, the more brightly His light shines. The Lord has been raising up many prayer warriors who are praying fervently for repentance and pleading with God for mercy amid judgment.

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With amazement we see what the Lord has wrought here at Canaan. In spite of weakness and helplessness, people have been blessed. Great is His faithfulness. His goodness is new every morning.

Not that we want to ignore the sad state of our world. God is increasingly sidelined and forgotten. Lawlessness is on the rise in our countries and worldwide. Hopelessness, anxiety about the future, and despair are the outcome. And if anyone happens to think of God, questions fill their minds. "*Where are You, God?*" - "*What do You say to all this?*"

Perhaps we have even experienced these questions rise in our own minds too? "*Why isn't God intervening in my personal situation. Why is God not raising up new people within the various church ministries or missions, for those that are seeking retirement or have diminished health? What does the future hold? What is God's plan?*"

The poet and mystic St John of the Cross was addressing members of religious orders in their yearning for divine revelations when he wrote: God might answer ... [one] after this manner, saying: If I have spoken all things to thee in My Word, Which is My Son, and I have no other word, what answer can I now make to thee, or what can I reveal to thee which is greater than this? Set thine eyes on Him alone, for in Him I have spoken and revealed to thee all things, and in Him thou shalt find ... the whole; for He is My complete locution [communication] and answer, and He is all My vision and all My revelation. (Ascent of Mount Carmel Book 2, chapter 22).

How abundantly we have been blessed through this revelation of the love of God - especially at Christmas. Perhaps we approached Christmas Eve feeling low and burdened only to be filled with joy by the good news, "*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory*" (John 1:14 NKJV). Like the rays of the sun His glory has been revealed to us in so many different ways. We have seen His glory in His love, His wisdom, His truth and justice, and in His nature as the source and well-spring of life.

Which particular ray of His glory will He reveal to us this year?

Let us reflect on that holy moment in our Carol Service on Christmas Eve when the choir sings; "*When all was still, the night half spent, His Almighty Word came down from heaven.*"

At that moment the figure of Baby Jesus is brought to the front of the chapel and laid in the manger. Who can fathom it? His Almighty Word came down to us in the form of a little Child that couldn't even speak.

*If I want to grasp this miracle,
I must be still, full of reverence,
worship in awe, and then I'll comprehend
that the love of God is never-ending.*

Christian Fürchtegott Gellert

When the Word of God descended to His people from Sinai amid thunder and lightning, smoke and fire, they were terror-stricken. The voice of God was too powerful for them to bear. Moses had to act as mediator. He alone climbed the mountain and received the Ten Commandments. How fervently Moses prayed that his people would keep the Word of God! His last legacy on God's behalf was, "*Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe—all the words of this law. For it is no empty word for you, but your very life*" (Deuteronomy 32:46 NKJV, v.47 ESV-UK). But Moses also knew that the people were weak and susceptible to temptation. Another Mediator would have to come. This is why Moses prophesied "*The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me among your own brothers. You must listen to him and all that He says in My name*" (cf. Deuteronomy 18:15; 18:19).

No, God did not abandon His beloved people. He ripped open the heavens and His Word came down from heaven to us in the form of His only begotten Son.

In Him the prophetic word is now fulfilled: "*What I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach*" (Deuteronomy 30:11 NIV) - "*On the contrary, the word is very close to you — in your mouth, even in your heart; therefore, you can do it!*" (Deuteronomy 30:14 CJB, cf. Romans 10:8-9).

Mother Basilea once wrote that it is almost as if you can hear the little Lord Jesus saying: "You didn't have access to the true love of God. The way was closed because of your sin. But your Heavenly Father longs for your love. This is why I came to you as a little Child. And though the distance between heaven and earth, humankind and God, were infinitely greater, My love would still bridge the gap. Love Divine was so great and powerful that it found a way to reach you human beings. Love Divine took on your flesh and blood, because I wanted to come to you in the closest way possible." (from Weihnachtbüchlein)

By now you will have guessed: This little Child is the Incarnate Word of God. **The Word made flesh.**



As the living Word of God He wants to dwell in us and make us come alive. Isn't that our greatest longing - for Him to come to us afresh in His Word and make it come alive for us in our everyday life? How can that happen?

Some weeks ago a pastor spoke on the parable of the two foundations (Luke 6:47-49). Prior to that, we read how so many countries in Europe and across the world were hit by terrible flood disasters. The news showed images of homes and entire city districts being swept away by the floods.

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You can also liken the Word of God to a sharp pruning knife, which cuts away useless or harmful branches, for only then can the vine bear new fruit. The vine cannot resist the cutting away. Whoever says yes to the pruning-knife will bring forth fruit.

Let us be silent for a moment at the manger and listen to what Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, is saying to each one of us. The following passage is from the "Weihnachtbüchlein", a booklet by Mother Basilea that hasn't been produced in English.

*"Rejoice, for heaven comes down when you turn to Me.
Start afresh to love Me with all your heart,
with all your strength,
with all your mind.
Keep Me always at the center of your life.
Give Me your deepest desires.
Then you will be intimately united with your God
and become happy children of God,
knowing heaven is yours - here and now."*

Our dear friends - near or far, we are one in the wonderful love of Jesus, so deep and wide. The Father in heaven sent us His only begotten Son. Jesus became man. He feels with us, He comes alongside us, He comforts us, He lifts us up when we are down, and in the coming year He will always show us the next step. Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, has a claim on our love more than anyone or anything else.

O rejoice, soon the time will come when He draws near - keep your heart and hands ready for the spiritual gifts He has prepared for you this Christmas!

One with you in Jesus' love,

The Evangelical Sisters of Mary

The pastor expressed it something like this: Building on soft ground is much easier and perhaps less costly. But the consequences can be devastating. Building on rock is much more difficult and costs more. But even when the storm rages, the house built on the solid foundation continues to stand.

In a nutshell Jesus is saying: The man who built on the sand had indeed heard God's Word but didn't put it into practice. But the man who builds on the rock is the man who hears God's Word and does it.



That was a powerful call to us as the Church, the Bride of Christ. What have we built our lives on? Our house? Yes, we have all heard God's Word, read it daily, love and value it. But we can never fulfil His Word, His commands, by our own strength. Jesus says, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5 NIV). He has clearly shown us the way.

"Without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:9, 14 NKJV) "If you really love me, you will keep the commandments I have given you." (John 14:15, JB Phillips) Love is the key. We need to nurture our love for Him and allow Him to renew our love again and again, so that He - the Word - can abide in us. Then we can withstand the onslaughts of the evil one. Then we will recognise his intentions. We will see how he tries to weaken us, for instance, through unbelief, anxiety, worries, a critical attitude, divisiveness (Colossians 1:27). But Christ in us, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27), is stronger than all the devil's wicked schemes.

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2021 Manger Scene inside our Chapel