

INFORMATION:

January 28 2017: Sister Sylvanie Colombier will make her Final Vows in the Church of St. Catherine Valence FRANCE. Holy Mass will be celebrated by Mgr. Yves Michel, bishop of Valence. You are invited to join with her in praying the Magnificat in thanksgiving and to continue to pray for Sacramentine Vocations on the 8th of every month.

FEAST DAYS IN JANUARY:

- 1st= Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God
50th World Day of Peace... "Non-violence: a style of politics for peace" is the theme chosen by Pope Francis.
- 6 = **THE EPIPHANY:** "manifestation" of God to the Magi who set out to visit the Divine Child....Following the Star let us journey with them.
- 8 = The Baptism of Jesus. The "Christmas Season" comes to an end.
- 18-25 = **Week of prayer for Christian Unity:** an invitation to live more profoundly the "Joy of the Gospel".
- 25 = Conversion of St. Paul. Peter Vigne invites us to observe the feast as he used to by reading the account of the conversion in the Acts of the Apostles 22, 3-16.

TESTIMONY: Thank you for your testimony Marlucci.

I find "Reflections" a helpful tool and a useful guide for our experiences and reflections on our path of faith. It really helps us to share our faith and speak of our Christian witnessing when we come together. With the help of "Reflections" we are following a "school of Evangelisation" during our meetings and with our families. Being part of the "Associates" is indeed a great joy and "Reflections" strengthens our spirit and increases our knowledge. Marlucci PVEA Cachoeira, Bahia, BRAZIL.



May the Lord be praised

for the gifts we received from Him in 2016

May his Presence among us be a blessing, Peace and Joy for each one during this time of Advent and CHRISTMAS. Happy Feast Days. A Peaceful and Blessed New Year 2017 to all our readers, friends and communities.



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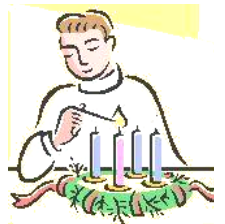
Here we are again in December and **ADVENT has arrived!** Already department stores are decked with Christmas lights and decorations and there is a huge increase in Internet sales of Christmas gifts with "Black Friday" and "Cyber Monday" now added to the "shopping days to Christmas"! And yet, so often, this big spend leaves a trail of troubles and misery in its wake. A commercial Christmas is not the true spirit of a **Christian Christmas.**

Does that mean it's a sad and joyless time? Not at all! In the Christian tradition **Christmas is a Day and a Time of Celebration....**but one has to prepare for it. Obviously, one prepares the home by making it Christmassy for family homecomings and visits from friends. Shouldn't this preparation also include oneself, as Peter Vigne suggests "**to prepare oneself well**" for the coming Feast?. Let us prepare well to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas. Are we able to share with others and show the meaning of this major Holy Day which is at the heart of our Christian Faith? Will our good wishes and cards speak more of the "**Christmas mystery**" ...than of Santa's sleigh and jingling bells?

And so this year, let us make a special effort to put a **Crib** in the window or the hallway of our home, **with a Star and a Light! Have a Joyful Christmas.** 25 December the "anniversary" of the birth of JESUS, Son of God and Son of Mary at BETHLEHEM...

ADVENT...
prepare well

"God sends us his Son, who alone contains all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge of his Father and who understands infinitely well what is most agreeable to him...."



Father of mercy, God of all consolation.... in your loving kindness you have given us your beloved Son who is the eternal Wisdom come down from Heaven for the life of the world... Your Son on becoming man, also became food to nourish us, and so we pray for the grace to prepare well to receive him. May all our prayers, penances and our good deeds have but this one aim, to be so well prepared that we can profit by his visit.."

PBL. extracts

“For us....he came down from heaven, and by the

Jesus, gift of the Father

Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man”.

We are used to hearing and saying that when we recite the Creed at Mass every Sunday. However, Advent can help us to say it with more meaning and deeper faith, because it is at **Christmas that this Good News – the Gospel comes to us**. To draw close to us, **“God sent his Son”** Peter Vigne reminds us. This is a gift of his **“loving kindness for us”**. Are we so busy and distracted, that we are almost indifferent to this “Good News” just like the many other news items that are covered on Television and then forgotten..... However, Peter Vigne invites us to pray, asking God our Father for the grace to mark this Advent in a unique and special way as we prepare our hearts to welcome the One who comes: **“give us the grace to prepare well...”** Yes, **he comes for you in a very personal way** so open the door of your heart to receive him. At every Mass Jesus comes and in receiving him in Holy Communion you can become a living Bethlehem! *“He came unto his own and his own did not receive him”* St. John tells us. **Receive him and let him be your Joy.**

Advent and Christmas are **seasons of Hope**. This is a wonderful time to prepare as a family to welcome the Divine-Child: **“so that we may profit by his visit”** and share the Good News with those around us! BR

Who can be fully recount your mercies?

It is not possible to diminish or increase them

Nor is it possible to fathom the wonders of the Lord.

When man thinks he has finished, then he is only beginning!

And having applied himself greatly
Only a profound admiration remains.

Based on Sirach 18 verses 1-8

HOLY MARY, MOTHER OF GOD

you have given the world
its true light, Jesus,
your Son – the Son of God.

You abandoned yourself completely
to God's call and thus became
a wellspring of the goodness
which flows forth from him.

Show us Jesus. Lead us to him.

Teach us to know and love him,

so that we too can become capable of true love

and be fountains of living
water in the midst of a
thirsting world.

Benedict XVI God is Love



The History of Christmas Trees.

It is a tradition....to go out before Christmas and look for an evergreen fir tree to bring indoors, as a decoration for the festive season. Why? WHERE DID THIS TRADITION COME FROM? From time immemorial trees that kept their leaves were believed to have some form of magical or religious powers. In Greece and Rome ivy was chosen to decorate and crown.....the Druids used mistletoe. The people of central and northern



Europe believed that evergreens had power to cure diseases. But what is the connection between a “tree” and the celebration of the birth of Jesus?

We can trace the connection back to the eight century when St. Boniface, an English bishop arrived in Germany announcing the Good News, the Gospel! After a long period of preaching he went to Rome to meet with Pope Gregory II. On his return to Germany, during Christmas 723 he became painfully aware that the inhabitants had returned to their ancient “belief” and were about to celebrate the winter solstice by sacrificing a young boy to the sacred oak tree of Odin! Boniface, armed with an axe rushed forward and cut down the tree and to his amazement a young fir tree sprang up from the roots of the oak. Boniface saw this as a sign of the Christian faith and a symbol of the permanent love of God. When Christians humbly asked their bishop **how they should celebrate Christmas**, he invited them to put a fir tree in their homes and adorn it with apples (which recall the temptation) and with **candles to represent the Light of Christ illuminating all peoples! The Christmas tree would thus become the tree of Peace, Life, Light..... reaching up to Heaven.**

Think about that when you are putting up the Christmas tree!

Set up a CRIB, why not?

Setting up the Nativity scene is a simple and direct way of sharing with the whole family the drama of Christ's birth, and it can be done over the 4 weeks of Advent.

For the **first week** the “stable” is empty: sign of our waiting.

Week 2: add a little straw or hay, a sign of “your personal” preparation.

Week 3: Mary and Joseph are now placed in the stable and with them some of the animals. Let the focus of your prayer this week be on welcoming the Divine Child and recognising him when he comes on Christmas Eve.

Christmas Eve: gather with the family around the crib now with the baby Jesus in the manger and sing together: “Away in a manger”. The crib is a way of sharing the message of Christmas: that Jesus was born into a family that didn't have much by way of worldly goods, but had **LOVE** in abundance. **This is Christmas:**

“God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son”