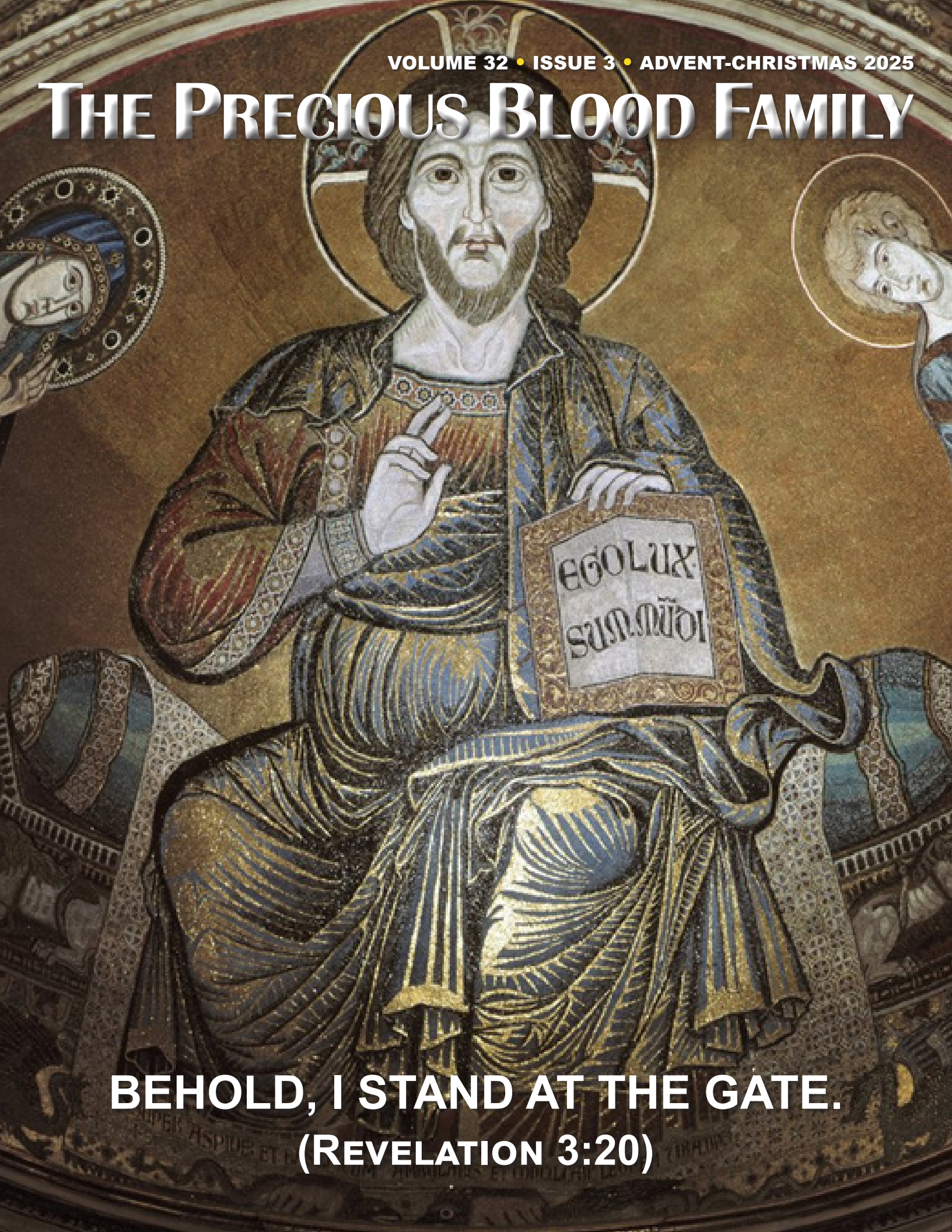


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THE PRECIOUS BLOOD FAMILY



**BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE GATE.
(REVELATION 3:20)**



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FAMILY**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 3 Editorial**
Fr. John Colacino C.PP.S.
- 4 'Tis the Season**
Fr. John Colacino C.PP.S.
- 6 The Prophets in Advent**
Sr. Patricia Schoelles SSJ
- 8 The Virgin of Guadalupe:
Presence of Hope**
Fr. Germán Santiago Estévez C.PP.S.
- 11 Voice from Tradition:
A Sermon on Christmas Joy**
St. John Henry Newman
- 14 Nativity**
Antonio Selvaggi
- 15 The Grace of Epiphany**
Katherine Cappuccio

EDITORIAL

T*his issue of the Precious Blood Family* will arrive in the waning weeks of the Jubilee Year of Hope. Opened by Pope Francis it is left to his successor Pope Leo XIV to close the year on the solemnity of the Epiphany. Hope, of course, is central any year to the Advent and Christmas seasons and our contributors have not failed to offer words of encouragement in these trying times. Advent is also the time for the prophets to speak, often from the experience of exile, but never without hope. In addition to our authors, Pope Leo in his recent exhortation on the poor, *Dilexit te*, leaves no doubt as to the prophetic role of the Church in defense of social justice and the most vulnerable in society.

On All Saints Day, the Holy Father proclaimed St. John Henry Newman the 38th Doctor of the Church. In honour of this, Newman's words grace this issue's *Voice from Tradition* feature on the theme of joy—a note that resonates especially at this time of year. A more sobering theme may be found in the daily Advent meditations at sanguischristi.com, which feature selections from Newman's famous sermons on the Antichrist.

With so much uncertainty facing the world, I hope the words offered here will kindle hope anew in all our hearts well beyond the Jubilee. As we embark on the new year coming, I am reminded of Pope Francis' words on hope in his bull of indiction announcing the Holy Year:

In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring. Even so, uncertainty about the future may at times give rise to conflicting feelings, ranging from confident trust to apprehensiveness, from serenity to anxiety, from firm conviction to hesitation and doubt. Often, we come across people who are discouraged, pessimistic and cynical about the future, as if nothing could possibly bring them happiness... Hope is the virtue that, so to speak, gives inward direction and purpose to the life of believers. For this reason, the Apostle Paul encourages us to “rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, and persevere in prayer” (Rom 12:12). Surely we need to “abound in hope” (cf. Rom 15:13), so that we may bear credible and attractive witness to the faith and love that dwell in our hearts; that our faith may be joyful and our charity enthusiastic; and that each of us may be able to offer a smile, a small gesture of friendship, a kind look, a ready ear, a good deed, in the knowledge that, in the Spirit of Jesus, these can become, for those who receive them, rich seeds of hope... Let us even now be drawn to this hope! Through our witness, may hope spread to all those who anxiously seek it. May the way we live our lives say to them in so many words: “Hope in the Lord! Hold firm, take heart and hope in the Lord!” (Ps 27:14). May the power of hope fill our days, as we await with confidence the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and glory, now and forever.

May God's richest blessings of hope be yours in this time of grace.

FR. JOHN COLACINO C.PP.S.

'Tis the Season

Fr. John Colacino C.PP.S

St. Francis de Sales once preached an Advent sermon where he reminded his audience, “Our good is found in the present moment, which is today. Our life is the day in which we are living; who can promise oneself a tomorrow? ...Absolutely no one—no matter who [s]he is. Our life consists in today, in this present moment in which we are living, and we cannot promise or assure ourselves of any other than that which we now enjoy... Our whole life really depends on each present moment when we hear what must be done.”

For Christians, however, the passing moment is always embedded in time made sacred by the Church’s liturgical year of seasons and feasts. We live in liturgical time and reckon our days by the liturgical calendar more than its competitors—the civil year, the academic year, the season associated with your favorite sport, and yes, the occasions marked by Hallmark. As Abbot Guéranger, the pioneer of the modern liturgical movement, reminds

us: “It is... Jesus Christ himself who is the source as well as the object of the liturgy; and hence the ecclesiastical year... is neither more nor less than the manifestation of Jesus Christ and His mysteries, in the Church and in the faithful soul. It is the divine cycle in which appear all the works of God, each in its turn... what the liturgical year does for the Church at large, it does also for the soul of each one of the faithful that is careful to receive the gift of God.”

But to live these seasons and feasts well, to learn from their wisdom, and experience their power to give meaning to life, we need a certain sensitivity. We need ways to develop a sense, a feel for, the constant interplay between the rhythms of nature, the liturgy, and our own lives. We need seasonal disciplines, to imbue us with that special spirit which helps us be more conscious of the continual flow of sacred time in which we are immersed.

Advent is a case in point. It comes just as autumn gives way to winter. The blazing hues of autumn fade with each November day till before you know it, trees are barren, crisp turns to cold, daylight to twilight, and life to death. In concert with nature, Advent too speaks of a world swept by foreboding winds, turning ever colder; a world in decay, afraid of the gathering gloom, and lurking death: A world exhausted, fallen asleep—a world in need of a Savior. Almost imperceptibly, the last weeks of Ordinary Time change their focus as one year of grace comes to an end and another begins.

Isaiah, the prophet of Advent, captures these moods of Mother Church and Mother Nature at this time of year: We have all withered like leaves, and our guilt carries us away like the wind. A late autumn, Advent mood, which might even match our own disposition, should we be weary in body or in spirit.

But the days grow shorter and darker just for a while. Come the winter solstice, they will lengthen, light returning slowly. Nature may lie dormant in seeming death, but life is just beneath the surface, awaiting the summons of a new spring—just as somber Advent will end on a silent night when angels suddenly sing: “Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God’s people on earth.”

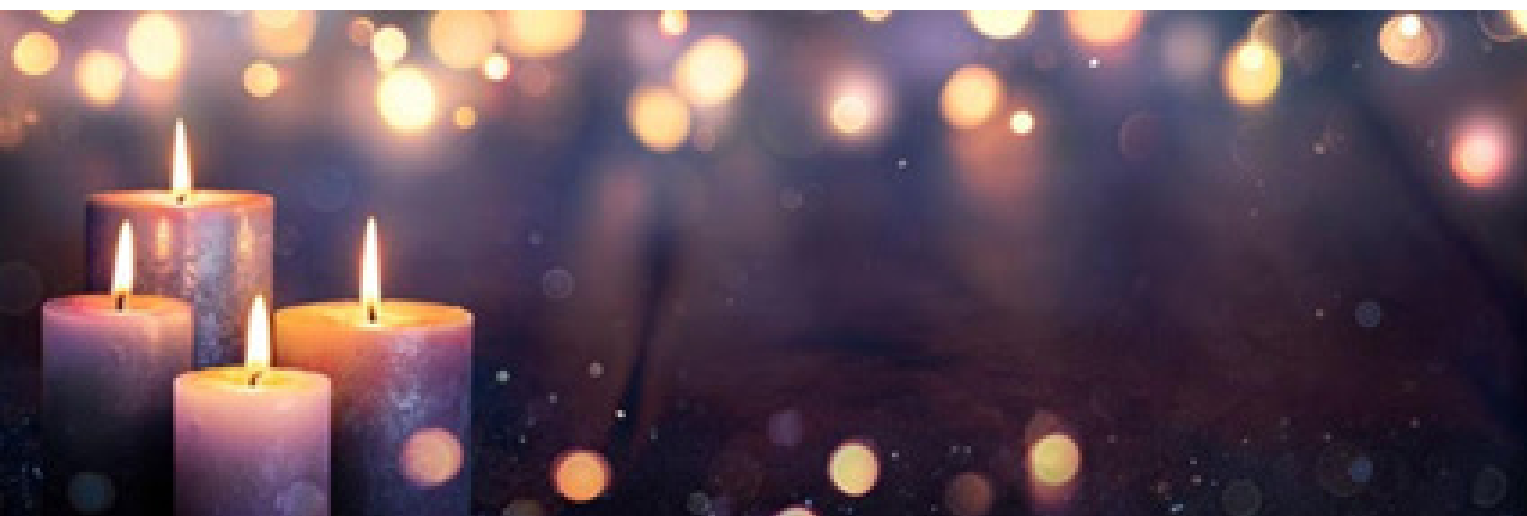
And while we wait for God’s promises to be fulfilled, we must be watchful, and alert—watching for signs like those Nature gives, of winter’s approach and winter’s end. And for signs like those the Church gives: like the Advent wreath with its light increasing week by week. And, above all, the Eucharist, where Christ comes now, till he comes again in glory—all signs the day of our Lord Jesus Christ draws near. ‘Cause Christian life can never come to a standstill. It’s always in motion, going forward, day by day, and step by

step, toward the reign of God. We are a pilgrim people, and our God walks with us. To stand still on this path is to risk being left behind.

This then is the mystery of Advent: looking to the past, when Christ came first, and to the future, when he will come again, but living in the present. So, welcome the season. It has much to teach, and much to give. Not least of which is hope: hope that a new age will dawn on a weary world as it did on Bethlehem. In the meantime, we hasten toward it with righteous deeds [so that] at his coming, [we might be] gathered at his right hand...worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom where he lives and reigns, forever and ever. Amen (cf. Collect for the First Sunday of Advent)

Fr. John Colacino C.PP.S. is a Missionary of the Precious Blood of the Atlantic Province.

*And, above all,
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The Prophets in Advent

Sr. Patricia Schoelles SSJ

As A LITURGICAL SEASON, Advent is absolutely associated with the prophets. Isaiah is of particular importance, associated as he is with passages that seem to refer to the eventual coming of the Messiah despite having been written centuries before the birth of Jesus. His writings also include passages calling the Israelite people to return to lives lived in accordance with being in covenant with God.

Some prophets are easily recognizable by us; others are more obscure. Even among Biblical scholars some prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel are labeled as ‘major’ prophets while Hosea, Micah, Amos and others are known as ‘minor’ prophets. But whether they are popular or little known, prophets are interwoven throughout the Scriptures and integral to the content of its messages and methods of expression. An example of the way prophets play such intriguing roles throughout both the Christian Scriptures and the Hebrew Bible is found in the passage read in Luke 4:16-30. This passage finds Jesus at the beginning of his public ministry as he returns to his hometown of Nazareth following a wonderfully successful mission to the neighboring village of Capernaum.

On the Sabbath he enters the synagogue, opens the scroll and reads from Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.”



Jesus then announced, “Today in your hearing these things are fulfilled.”

At first the crowds appear quite happy to hear Jesus proclaim this message, but he senses that they are actually disturbed by the whole event. In fact, he follows up with the comment, “No prophet is accepted in his own country.”

At this point, Jesus uses two images involving other prophets to drive home a critical point, one that we can all refer to as we make our way through our Advent journeys. He refers to the story of Elijah who was sent to the most morally and spiritually vulnerable widow of her time, the widow at Zarephath in Sidon (1 Kings 5). Not only was this woman morally and spiritually compromised, but she wasn’t even a Jew! Yet the prophet Elijah was sent to her.

And he raises the story of the prophet Elisha cleansing Naaman the Syrian (2 Kings 5). Naaman was not the best of his batch, either; in fact, he was known to be the least pious of all and the one most likely to amount to nothing! And like the widow, he wasn’t a Jew himself!

Luke’s passage says that, as a result of hearing these references, the crowd “were all filled with fury” and “they drove him out of the town” and tried to “hurl him down” the hill.

In this passage, Luke provides a story with references to several prophets. He includes one passage we have probably heard often. He uses two images showing prophets selecting unlikely and undesirable people to receive their healing and their care. Yet it was for these “outsider” figures that the prophets had come. And by analogy, of course, these stories ultimately point to Jesus. He certainly came for the outsiders, the impious ones, the ‘losers.’

So, when we read Luke 4:16-30 and ask, “But why did that crowd get so mad after Jesus read about the Anointed One and referenced two stories about prophets ministering to two undesirable, needy people who weren’t ‘one of us’?”, the answer might actually be clearer than we expect. But at the same time, it might not be at all what we want to hear!

In fact, we are probably very like that crowd hearing that the Messiah is here for us right now. But like them, we are likely to assume that He comes to us because we deserve it, we’ve earned it, we’re the chosen ones, we’ll at last be in the clover we’ve deserved for so long. Of course, that’s not the message of the prophets at all. Their message, and that of this story, is that we are the undesirable leper needing to be healed, we are the compromised widow failing to live for the Kingdom of God.

*Advent also invites us
to assume
our rightful place
as part of the crowd
who need to be healed,
who need to be cleansed,
who are blind
and need to see,
who are oppressed
and need to be set free,
who are captive
in need of true liberty.*

Yes, Advent offers us four weeks of “dipping into the prophets.” Advent offers us a chance to focus on the Messiah who comes and who will come to bring us salvation. And Advent also invites us to assume our rightful place as part of the crowd who need to be healed, who need to be cleansed, who are blind and need to see, who are oppressed and need to be set free, who are captive in need of true liberty.

Sr. Patricia Schoelles SSJ is a Sister of St. Joseph of Rochester, NY.

The Virgin of Guadalupe: Presence of Hope

Fr. Germán Santiago Estévez C.PP.S.

It was December 9, 1531, and Mexico was still suffering the effects of being conquered territorially, culturally, and spiritually. The Mexican people of that era were suffering in many ways: displacement, in-fighting within their own community as well as with other communities. They were also suffering from the many diseases the Conquistadors brought with them.

Early that morning, a morning like many others, a man of humble origins named Juan Diego was going to visit the parish where he often went to pray. But that day would prove to be very special as he had his first encounter with the Lady from Heaven. They say it all began when Juan Diego was passing by the side of a huge hill called Tepeyac. He heard some very beautiful birdsong he had never heard before and stopped to listen. Out of curiosity he went to see from where the music was coming from and then everything fell silent. He then heard a voice as sweet as a mother's calling her son, but it was calling him, saying, "Juanito, Juan Diego, come here." He approached the Lady, fearful and astonished. She continued speaking to him with very familiar words, again like those of a mother. It was certainly the voice of a Heavenly Mother.

When he stood in front of her, he didn't know what was happening; he thought he was dreaming. She told him, "I am the Virgin Mary,

the Mother of the true God, the Lord of heaven and earth. I very much want a temple built here to bring the people closer to God. I will hear those who cry out to me there. I will cure their pains and sorrows and bring them to God."

The Virgin Mary asked Juan to go speak to the Franciscan bishop, Fray Juan de Zumárraga, and tell him that she is asking for a small house to be built on the top of the hill so that the prayers of those who seek and honor her can be heard. She said to Juan, "Go and put all your effort into this, and I will thank you and repay you greatly for your work."

Juan Diego, though fearful, went to carry out the task. Upon arrival at the bishop's residence, he had to wait for the bishop to see him. After some time, he was received and Juan delivered the message the Lady gave him, but the bishop didn't believe him. He returned worried and spoke again with the Queen of Heaven who was waiting for him, telling her that the bishop had not believed him. She asked him to return the next day, and so he did. The following day he did everything possible to see the bishop, and after listening again to what he said, the bishop still did not believe him. This time he asked Juan Diego to bring him an unmistakable sign so he could believe him.

Upon seeing the image of the Lady of Heaven, however, they discovered a great message of hope for themselves.

After dismissing him, the bishop sent some servants to follow him to see where Juan Diego was going, though in an instant they lost sight of him.

Meanwhile, Juan Diego was conversing with the Virgin Mary and after telling her everything, she told him to return again the next day, and she would give him the sign that the bishop requested. Juan Diego did not, however, return because he was taking care of his very sick uncle for whom there was no longer any hope of a cure. He went instead to find a priest to hear his uncle's confession and because he did not wish to be distracted by the Heavenly Lady, he avoided the path by Tepeyac Hill and went by another way so that the Lady of Heaven would not see him. Nevertheless, she appeared to him in a different place. Despite Juan Diego's resistance, she convinced him to go and take the sign she had prepared to the bishop. She sent him to cut some nearby flowers to give to the bishop. In the meantime, she would visit his uncle, and he would be healed.

Juan Diego arrived at the bishop's palace and after waiting a long time, he was finally received. He gave him the flowers and upon opening his tilma, the bishop discovered the miracle. He saw the image of the Virgin Mary imprinted on the cloak and thus began the Miracle of Guadalupe: the encounter between heaven and earth, the visit of God in the image of the Virgin Mary, whom the Mexican people call Guadalupe.

From that moment on, Juan Diego's life changed. He was invited along with his uncle to live in the bishop's residence. He dedicated the rest of his life to telling everyone who came to hear him about the Guadalupe miracle. Meanwhile, the small house dedicated to the Virgin of Guadalupe was constructed on Tepeyac Hill—today the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, three miles north of Mexico City below the same hill.



Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Basilica de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe) in Gustavo A. Madero, Mexico City, Mexico

From a different perspective, however, the Mexican people were still suffering, scared, and confused. Before all this they had offered sacrifices to different deities such as the sun, the moon, water, etc., and were now under the yoke of the Conquistadors. They realized that the gods they believed in had abandoned them. The human sacrifices offered to these deities were of no avail. They saw their way of life coming to an end, their culture drying up, constant looting and fighting and with

them, death and destruction. Upon seeing the image of the Lady of Heaven, however, they discovered a great message of hope for themselves. While looking at the image, they saw the color of her skin was like theirs. They saw the sun behind her and the moon under her feet. They saw the stars, the flowers, her hands—her entire image was a great catechesis.



For the Mexican brothers and sisters of that time, the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe brought a message of hope where they discovered how not everything was ending, but that something new was beginning. It was the meeting place between heaven and earth, the vision of God on this earth.

Ever since the miracle of Guadalupe became widely known, millions of faithful from all over the world have visited the Basilica of Guadalupe. Many have reported receiving miracles, whether seeking them or not. All throughout the year, it is a place for Catholics and other Christians to pray, give thanks, and seek a favor from God through the intercession of the Virgin of Guadalupe. December is the busiest month, as her feast day is on the 12th—when many seek to be in the Virgin's "little

house."

Fr. Germán Santiago Estévez C.P.P.S. is a Missionary of the Precious Blood of the Atlantic Province and resides in Toronto, Canada.

Fr. Ron Wiecek C.P.P.S. of the same province assisted in the translation from the Spanish language original.

VOICE FROM TRADITION

A Sermon on Christmas Joy

St. John Henry Newman

***And the angels said unto them,
Fear not: for, behold,
I bring you good tidings
of great joy,
which shall be to all people.
For unto you is born this day
in the city of David
a Saviour,
which is Christ the Lord.
(Luke ii. 10, 11).***

There are two principal lessons which we are taught on the great Festival which we this day celebrate, lowliness and joy. This surely is a day, of all others, in which is set before us the heavenly excellence and the acceptableness in God's sight of that state which most men have, or may have, allotted to them, humble or private life, and cheerfulness in it. If we consult the writings of historians, philosophers, and poets of this world, we shall be led to think great men happy; we shall be led to fix our minds and hearts upon high or conspicuous stations, strange adventures, powerful talents to cope with them, memorable struggles, and great destinies. We shall consider that the highest course of life is the mere pursuit, not the enjoyment of good.

But when we think of this day's Festival, and what we commemorate upon it, a new and

very different scene opens upon us. First, we are reminded that though this life must ever be a life of toil and effort, yet that, properly speaking, we have not to seek our highest good. It is found, it is brought near us, in the descent of the Son of God from His Father's bosom to this world. It is stored up among us on earth. No longer need men of ardent minds weary themselves in the pursuit of what they fancy may be chief goods; no longer have they to wander about and encounter peril in quest of that unknown blessedness to which their hearts naturally aspire, as they did in heathen times. The text speaks to them and to all, "Unto you," it says, "is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Nor, again, need we go in quest of any of those things which this vain world calls great and noble. Christ altogether dishonoured what the world esteems, when He took on Himself a rank and station which the world despises. No lot could be more humble and more ordinary than that which the Son of God chose for Himself.

Let us steadily contemplate the mystery and say whether any consequence is too great to follow from so marvellous a dispensation; any mystery so great, any grace so overpowering, as that which is already manifested in the incarnation and death of the Eternal Son. Were we told that the effect of it would be to make us as Seraphim, that we were to ascend as high as He descended low—would that startle us after the Angel's news to the shepherds? And this indeed is the effect of it, so far as such words may be



spoken without impiety. Men we remain, but not mere men, but gifted with a measure of all those perfections which Christ has in fulness, partaking each in his own degree of His Divine Nature so fully, that the only reason (so to speak) why His saints are not really like Him, is that it is impossible—that He is the Creator, and they His creatures; yet still so, that they are all but Divine, all that they can be made without violating the incommunicable majesty of the Most High. Surely in proportion to His glory is His power of glorifying; so that to say that through Him we shall be made all but gods—though it is to say, that we are infinitely below the adorable

Creator—still is to say, and truly, that we shall be higher than every other being in the world; higher than Angels or Archangels, Cherubim or Seraphim—that is, not here, or in ourselves, but in heaven and in Christ:—Christ, already the first-fruits of our race, God and man, having ascended high above all creatures, and we through His grace tending to the same high blessedness, having the earnest of His glory given here, and (if we be found faithful) the

Let us seek the grace of a cheerful heart, an even temper, sweetness, gentleness, and brightness of mind, as walking in His light, and by His grace.

fulness of it hereafter.

If all these things be so, surely the lesson of joy which the Incarnation gives us is as impressive as the lesson of humility. St. Paul gives us the one lesson in his epistle to the Philippians: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:" and St. Peter gives us the lesson of joyfulness: "whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." [Phil. ii. 5-7. 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.]

Take these thoughts with you, my brethren, to your homes on this festive day; let them be with you in your family and social meetings. It is a day of joy: it is good to be joyful—it is wrong to be otherwise. For one day we may put off the burden of our polluted consciences, and rejoice in the perfections of our Saviour Christ, without thinking of ourselves, without thinking of our own miserable uncleanness; but contemplating His glory, His righteousness, His purity, His majesty, His overflowing love. We may rejoice in the Lord, and in all His creatures see Him. We may enjoy His temporal bounty and partake the pleasant things of earth with Him in our thoughts; we may rejoice in our friends for His sake, loving them most especially because He has loved them.

"God has not appointed us unto wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him." Let us seek the grace of a cheerful heart, an even temper, sweetness, gentleness, and brightness of mind, as walking in His light, and by His grace. Let us pray Him to give us the spirit of ever-abundant, ever-springing love, which overpowers and sweeps away the vexations of life by its own richness and strength, and which above all things unites us to Him who is the fountain and the centre of all mercy, loving kindness, and joy.

Excerpt from a Christmas sermon preached on December 25, 1825, in Parochial and Plain Sermons VIII, 17.

Nativity

Antonio Selvaggi

*Faith is the assurance of things hoped for,
the conviction of things unseen.*

(Hebrews 1:1)

Dark is my soul—mirrored black.
Drawn from power divine—humility I lack.
Inward, Outward, Unity—I decry
my incomprehension.

(He nestled in a manger—
swaddling clothes flag danger.
Affixed to a tree—
the King, and me.)

Dark is my soul in the light of God un-seen.
Impure is my heart to have not foreseen
his immaculate cry
by condescension.

(Of the life-giving Spirit, and of the pleasure of the Father,
did the timeless Word enter the world—sent farther
than eternity to the hopeful who believe
in the Light radiating through time’s narrow weave.)

Antonio Selvaggi resides in Toronto, Ontario.



The Grace of Epiphany

Katherine Cappuccio

Son of God, Love’s Pure Light. Son of God, Love’s Pure Light. I’m sure you recognize these words from the classic Christmas hymn “Silent Night”. Well, they belong to the Feast of the Epiphany too. Epiphany is from the Greek word *epiphaino*. *Epi* means “upon” and *phaino* means “to shine” or “to produce light”. An epiphany is a revelation of God’s presence and love, a manifestation of a divine reality or a spiritual truth. The Feast of the Epiphany celebrates the gift of the light of Christ to the world for all people, in all places and at all times. This is a universal message of hope.

Even before we could read, most of us knew from the catechism that “God is everywhere”. Yet God seems so elusive to many of us as adults. So, the story of the Magi who followed a star continues to beckon us today to seek and find the Christ Child in our lives. The epiphany story is about much more than astrologers from the east making a visit to the baby Jesus to bring him a few gifts! It’s about recognizing the gifts God has first given to us and the gifts continually being offered. It’s the showing of the divine through the humanity of Jesus. It’s the spiritual truth that in and through Christ, God’s presence is within us and permeates all of creation. Epiphany focuses on our response to the divine gifts we carry. We are to be manifestations of God in the world.

If a gift is offered, even when the giver is God, it may be accepted or rejected by the intended recipient. Herod could not receive the gift of Love’s pure Light. His hands and heart were already full of other things like his desire for power and the fear of losing it. In Luke’s gospel, the Annunciation proclaims Mary’s acceptance of God’s gift while Matthew proclaims the acceptance of Joseph and the Magi. One gift is God’s guidance given to Joseph in a dream and to the Magi in a star. The star is there for everyone. Even if unacknowledged or unfollowed, it’s always there for us. The invitations and promptings of God’s Spirit happen in the everyday circumstances of our lives. They too are meant for all of us, not just Mary, Joseph, and the Magi. The Magi discovered the baby Jesus in the most ordinary circumstances, in a home with his parents.

“And behold, the star they had seen at its rising preceded them until it came and stopped over the place where the child was.” The Magi noticed the star stopped, and they did too. In that place of stillness, they found the Christ Child. In our own spiritual journeys we see the star, lose sight of the star and discover the star again. As we seek God, so much more is God seeking us, and guiding

our way if only we stop to notice. Often we're moving too fast to be attentive to what's in our midst. Sometimes we're focused on other things and aren't open to experiencing the manifestations of God's presence.

Last September, a neighbor of mine posted his amazing picture of the Northern Lights visible right in our back yards. I didn't expect it, never looked

for it and missed it altogether. A lot depends on God sending us a star to guide our way. Even more depends on each one of us stopping to notice.

In reflecting on the Magi's risky journey, it seems significant to me that while trying to follow the guidance of the star, they traveled in the dark. In our dark night times, we may not perceive God's presence even though we

sincerely desire and seek it. These may be the times God is most active in our lives, but the spiritual gifts of darkness are gradually over time revealed to us.

The Epiphany is ongoing and happens throughout our lives. The Gospel's Epiphany is not the colloquial meaning of an "aha" moment or a flash of insight. However, we can become conscious of how the spiritual truths revealed in the Gospels are about each of us, not just the particular person in the story. We come to know how our lives and our stories are a very real participation in God's life and God's stories. Sometimes this does come in bursts of knowing. Perhaps you experienced a profound showing of how God was present with you in a crisis. Perhaps you understood how you participated in one of the Gospel mysteries or in the Paschal Mystery. Perhaps it was a moment when you simply deeply felt and believed you

are God's beloved. We may perceive a spiritual truth in something that was always present, but we failed to notice. Insights often deepen and unfold over time, sometimes long after the initial life experience. There are so many unrecognized gifts and graces. Epiphanic grace is always a gift. We can't make it happen. However, we can expectantly wait for it and give grateful homage after receiving it.

Matthew tells us the Magi upon seeing the child "prostrated themselves and did him homage" (Matt 2:11). Homage in the ancient world was paid to reverently honor a person of high rank like a king or to worship a god. The Greek word *proskynein* is used here which has the deeper meaning of worshipping God. Matthew uses the same word in several other places: healing the leper (Matt 8:1-4), after Jesus walked on water (Matt 14:33), women seeing Jesus after his resurrection (Matt 28:9). Matthew's Gospel is particularly concerned with the response to Jesus and his message. Like all invitations and gifts given to us, they require a response. One way we respond is through our worship.

Pope Francis called us “not to be satisfied with just having hope, but to radiate hope”.

Our worship is an expression of who we truly are, the Body of Christ. As we celebrate the mysteries of Christ in the liturgy, we are drawn to see them as manifestations of God here and now. This is continual because the mystery of God is inexhaustible. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, said all he knew of the mystery was revealed to him by the grace of God. He proclaimed that we “are coheirs and members of the same body” (Eph 3:6). As members of this body and children of God, we are to “shine like stars in the world” (Phil 2:15). Isaiah foretells “the glory of the Lord shines upon you” (Is 60:1) and “you shall be radiant at what you see” (Is 60:5). In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus tells us “You are the light of the world” (Matt 5:14). We carry an inner radiance. We are bearers of God’s light!

St. Ephrem the Syrian focused on the Magi themselves as “the gifts” rather than the symbolic meaning of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They offered the whole cosmos which they sought to understand. We too are gifts offered back to our creator. In the liturgy’s third Eucharistic Prayer we are offered back to God the Father with and through the Son: “May he make of us an eternal offering to you”.

When we use the spiritual gifts and graces God has given us, we manifest God’s presence and radiate God’s love

to others. This is a fitting homage. The way to honor the giver of gifts is to fully use and enjoy the gifts. The Wise Ones know themselves as bearers of God, recognize their gifts and share them abundantly with others. They freely and openly re-gift because they know that spiritual gifts grow when given away. How can our response be anything less than offering all that we have and all that we are back to God?

On January 6, 2026, the Feast of Epiphany, the last Holy Door will close as the Jubilee Year of Hope comes to an end at St. Peter’s Basilica. After opening the Holy Door at Rome’s Basilica of Saint Paul Outside-the-Walls on January 5, 2025, Cardinal James M. Harvey said Pope Francis called us “not to be satisfied with just having hope, but to radiate hope”. Cardinal Harvey called hope “the most beautiful gift the Church can give humanity”. As this Jubilee Year comes to an end, our witness to the gift of hope does not end. May who we are and what we do radiate hope for all. May we be manifestations of God’s light and love.

Katherine Cappuccio resides in Webster, NY, and is a member of the Giano Mission House in Rochester, NY.

I am the door. Whoever enters through me will be saved.

JOHN 10:9



Deus, qui in omni loco dominationis tuae es adorandus et glorificandus.

OUR APOSTOLATE



C.P.P.S. MISSION PROJECTS

has been deeply rooted in specific localities, above all by a significant presence in Tanzania for the past 50 years. Our projects have provided essential services such as clean water, education, healthcare, and sustainable development, focusing on marginalized communities.

The call to missionary discipleship, however, goes beyond geographical boundaries. We are being called to new horizons in response to the urgent needs of the Church. Rooted in the spirituality of the Precious Blood, C.P.P.S. Mission Projects is now prioritizing evangelization, formation, and social development in underserved communities worldwide.

As we entrust the Tanzanian initiatives to local leadership, we remain committed to fostering new missionary endeavors that bring Christ's reconciling love to the margins of society.

Find us at cppsmissionprojects.ngo.

WISE COUNSEL FROM BLESSED GIOVANNI MERLINI

"If we are still alive, it is by the grace of a kindly God who gives us a new opportunity to prepare ourselves for the great rendering of accounts."

"Internal and external travails are a hedge to the soul, like in a vineyard... Consider them this way and accept them in peace and humility: resignation, hence trust in God."

"One day we will understand the order God has maintained to lead us to salvation, and we will not cease thanking Him!"

"If your soul cannot find Jesus, just stay with Jesus. Those who are in a dark room do not see the companion, but they know he is there and that is enough for them not to be afraid!"

"One should abandon oneself totally to the divine will, not wanting to do anything if it is not what God wants. The afflictions, the perplexities, the agitations, and everything else, as long as they come with peace and are directed to the foot of the cross, it will go well..."

"As much as you can, promote mercy with its companions: pitying, consoling, comforting, encouraging, helping, foreseeing... and with this exercise say: My God, deal with me mercifully as I strive to show mercy to others. In this, we will experience great comfort, and while examining ourselves, we will find that we have a heart for our neighbors."



Unio Sanguis Christi

The Union of the Blood of Christ (Unio Sanguis Christi, USC) is the spiritual family fostered by the Missionaries of the Precious Blood, founded by St. Gaspar del Bufalo. Established by Fr. Francesco Albertini, its aim is to promote devotion to the Blood of Christ. Members commit themselves to live and promote the spirituality of the Blood of Christ.

RULE OF LIFE Members follow a program of spirituality solidly based on the traditions of the Catholic Church. Motivated by the love of Christ, who died for us, rather than by any moral obligation, members practice a rule of life inspired by Christ's unselfish love. Conversion and reconciliation are ongoing processes fostered by an appreciation for the Word of God, nurtured by the Eucharist, and wrapped in a life of prayer.

HOW TO ENROLL Any practicing Catholic may become a member of the Union upon completion of a period of formation. For information on joining or starting the USC in your parish, please contact Fr. Gerardo Laguartilla, C.P.P.S., at uscatlanticprovince@gmail.com.

Mass Association

Since 1883, with the approval of Pope Leo XIII, the Missionaries of the Precious Blood throughout the world have offered 4,000 Masses annually for those enrolled in their Mass Association. Enrollments can be made on behalf of both the living and the deceased.

HOW TO ENROLL

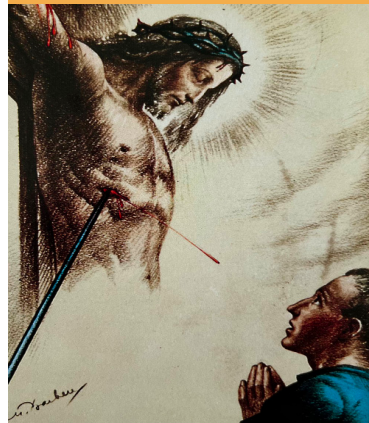
In Person or by Mail: Shrine of St. Gaspar
540 St. Clair Avenue West, Toronto, ON M6C 1A4

By Telephone: 416.653.4486

Online: Visit preciousbloodatlantic.org and click on 'Donations'.

Suggested Offering: \$25.00, plus \$4.00 postage if the Certificate is mailed.

Additionally, you can request a single Mass or make a donation to support the spirituality of the Precious Blood and the work of the Missionaries by completing the required fields on the website.



Vocations

The Missionaries of the Precious Blood continue St. Gaspar's Ministry of the Word by preaching renewal and conversion through missions and retreats. We bring the love of God to parishes, schools, hospitals, and prisons.

As missionaries, we work where the Church needs us most and where the Good News has not been heard. We walk with Jesus by sharing the joys and sufferings of the people with whom we work.

For more information, please contact Precious Blood Vocations at 705.507.4288 or email preciousvocations@gmail.com.



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