

of the Immaculate Virgin and the foster father of the Incarnate God, devoutly serving both while vigilantly protecting them from their enemies. St. Joseph suffers alongside his Divine and most holy charges, enduring great tribulations so that he and many others may profit from divine goodness.

The Holy Family presents the ideal of the Christian family and social life working for the redemption and salvation of souls. As true members of the greater Holy Family of Holy Mother Church, the Bride of Christ, we must share in this divine mission.

May the example of the Holy Family and the grace of God encourage us and others to live Christ more perfectly through an ever greater effort in and fidelity to this supernatural service of our neighbour – especially those in our family. The familiarity to which we are called – to be a part of the Mystical Body of Christ – is truly wonderful. Undeservedly, we are called to be the children of God. We have but to desire and pursue this greatest of joys and peace... the way is made straight by the grace of Our Lord and Saviour. Perfect joy is possible – now and forever! This should be our resolve as we celebrate the supernatural and most holy joy of Our Lord's Birth as the New Year commences.

On behalf of all the community at Holy Cross Seminary, I wish to thank you, our dear friends and benefactors, for your generous support over the last year. Your dedication in pursuing holiness, your prayers and your sacrifices have all contributed to the fortification of the Mystical Body of Christ – this includes the work of training tomorrow's priests. Please continue to pray that God send us many holy vocations. We also sincerely thank you for your generous material support that has enabled us to continue operating and improving the Seminary.

For your generosity, I assure you of our prayers and our commitment to and serious effort in training the young men God Providentially sends to Holy Cross Seminary. May God grant us at Holy Cross the discretion and zeal to be true Christs and to prepare His true priests and religious. May we live faithfully and fully the example of the Holy Family. God bless you and the Immaculate Virgin Mother of God watch over you in the New Year.

In Christ the King,

Rev. Fr. Vicente A. Griego
Rector, Holy Cross Seminary



Adoration of the Magi, Roman sarcophagus (4th Century AD)

Announcements:

- An Ignatian Retreat for Men (January 28 to February 2, 2013) is still open for registration. The retreat begins at 2:00 pm and ends at 11:30 am. Please visit the Seminary website for retreat information, registration forms and to verify your registration. You may email retreats@holycrossseminary.com or directly contact Fr. Christoph Pfluger at the Seminary. N.B. The Ladies Retreat (January 7 to 12, 2013) is fully booked.
- Fr. Sayed Elias, from Domus Dei Priory in Rockdale will be offering a non-Ignatian retreat for men at Holy Cross, February 18–23, 2013. Men interested should contact him at (02) 95 67 70 88 for retreat information and registration.



Southern Sentinel

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Dear Friends and Benefactors,

The season of Christmas is filled with great joy... but truly, only for those who have faith – for by faith, we know the truth of Christmas's significance. The Christian season of Christmas begins on Christmas Day, in contrast to the secular "Christmas Season" or simply the "Holiday Season" (with its "joy to the world"), which began even months *before* Advent (the Christian *preparation* for Christmas). What joy can the secular "Christmas" give when God is absent? True joy is had when we see, by Faith, that the Birth of Christ, the Saviour, is the means for man's present and eternal happiness.

The secular celebration of the "season's holiday" gives little reason to celebrate, except as an occasion to feast with family and friends. Christ and His reason for coming is the essence of the joy of Christmas and sadly, most do not know this reason or its consequences. Yes, "Christ was born on Christmas". But for this reality to be truly believed and firmly and clearly understood, the consequences must be earnestly pursued. Christmas Day is a beginning, not an end, as it is for many merchants, who quickly remove the gimmicks and decorations of the "Christmas" sales period and replace them with the next marketing strategy. How meaningless is Christmas when reduced to such natural objectives!

Christ's Birth signifies life – not merely human life in the world



Adoration of the Shepherds by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo

with family and friends (which is a good thing), but more importantly, Our Lord's Birth makes clear the very reason of our lives – to be alive *with* God, in His grace, now and forever! Christ comes to restore sinful man to this union with God. This is why we celebrate Christmas. Devoid of this truth, “Christmas” is vain, empty and dreadful – for without Christ, we do not truly live. Truly, Christmas is a celebration of God's stupendous love for His wayward children – *God Himself will come and save us* (Isaia 35:5).

The fact of God's love gives us hope to possess eternal and joyful life, which encourages us to conform our lives more perfectly to Christ's. Our Saviour has merited all the graces needed to enable us to cooperate in His work of our sanctification and salvation. Christ's mission proceeds from the Divine Goodness and God's love for men. The Word born Man is the means by which men may be *born again* in grace, our participation in God's Life. Grace makes sinners (former enemies of God) reconciled children of God. Christ's Birth and Epiphany are *manifestations* of God's love for His children – He seeks the sinner to make him a child of grace.

God's devoted solicitude for man's happiness, by raising him to greater union with Him, tenderly restores fallen man to that happiness forsaken by sin and reopens heaven to these divinised children of grace. This call to greater union is the offer to truly be an intimate member of the Divine Family, the Mystical Body of Christ.

God has deigned to share His perfect happiness of knowing and loving Himself with men. Foreseeing the self-inflicted disaster of man's fall from grace, God lovingly creates – desiring to, and knowing He can, overcome sin. Despite man's revolt, God can still bestow the greatest good possible to every man. God's remedy would be that man cooperates in this work of fulfilling His Will to restore sinful man to justice. Man would cooperate with grace to prevail over sin and merit Divine happiness. Unable to avail of God's help as an enemy of God, man would need a divine Intermediary – the eternal Son of God would be born a true Man and lead the children of God back to life. God's supreme goodness goes to such an extent to seek out the lost sheep, to heal the wounded and the infirm of this world – this is why we truly rejoice in the Birth of the Saviour.

Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will (Luke 2:14).

However, sinful men are not so inclined to this peace of Christ. A significant consequence of living Christ is to live *as* Christ in respect to our neighbour. Men are not as indulgent, merciful or kind as God is, in bearing with the faults of men and willing to persevere in helping others to realise the joyful living of Christ. When offended by the wrongdoings of our neighbour, or impatient that our family does not heed our advice, or spiteful of another's misconduct, we sharply quip: *You made your bed, now sleep in it!* This is not the work of Redemption: *...the lord of that servant being moved with pity, let him go and forgave him the debt. But when that servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow servants that owed him... and laying hold of him, throttled him, saying: Pay what thou owest* (Matthew 18:27-28).

It matters little what our role is in life. All men are called to adopt this disposition of God, as Christ's mission testifies, to patiently help others to know and love God. No matter the weakness or offence of our neighbour (distant or intimate), a refusal to exercise supernatural charity is contrary to Christ and even an offence against the goodness we have received from God. Such an attitude declares our lack of the Christ-like disposition of charity and kindness. Our charity is often merely natural; hence, we easily fail in charity to our neighbour because of our excuse that *they* lack charity to us. Were our charity supernatural, we would endure greater sufferings to help our neighbour.

Pre-eminently, the saints strove to replicate Christ's example in their various states of life, in their various roles in God's family. St. Paul well summarises this understanding of the Christian's role in the family of God:

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of charity, if any society of the spirit, if any bowels of commiseration: Fulfil ye my joy, that you may be of one mind, having the same charity, being of one accord, agreeing in sentiment. Let nothing be done

through contention, neither by vain glory: but in humility, let each esteem others better than themselves: Each one not considering the things that are his own, but those that are other men's. For let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who...emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross (Philippians 2:1-8).

To be a member of a family, sacrifices will inevitably be made for the good of others – even when the others do not wish to profit from this effort to share in what is supremely good; namely, to belong to the Holy Family of God.

If we consider the peace and joy of the Holy Family, rejected by the world and seeking refuge in a manger, we see the sacrifices each makes for the good of the others (and all men!) and that something other than worldly comfort and peace gives true and lasting joy. It is a peace that comes from God, in union with God, which is the strength by which the hardships of our earthly dealings are joyfully overcome. In dealing with difficult people, if we keep our eyes fixed upon our Ultimate End, we “look beyond” the trials of this life and by facing or even embracing these hardships we, like Christ and the Holy Family, work for the salvation of souls and joyfully profit from these trials.

On the other hand, if we are imbued with only a natural idea of joy, we will become frustrated in the face of difficulties and protest our loss of peace and joy as an infringement upon our rights, we will cry foul-play and rebuke our adversaries, we will attack opposition to our happiness – in effect, we will fail to help others to become like Christ and only wish to profit for our immediate happiness, forsaking, like Esau, our *first birthright*, which is the inheritance of heaven in the family of God: *...Jacob said to [Esau]: sell me thy first birthright. He answered: Lo I die, what will the first birthright avail me? ...[he made] little account of having sold his first birthright* (Genesis 25:31-34)

Although by sin we foolishly make little of trading eternal life for *a* temporal joy, God does not spitefully forsake us for our injustice to Him, and neither should we so easily decry the “injustices” we may suffer from our neighbour, even when close in familial relation.

The ideal of Christian society, and the family in particular, has been under attack for generations. Christ-like norms are obscured by *new* and even *unnatural* norms contrary to the good of society. At first, it seems that little can be done to check the tide of corruption and its debasing influence on society and family. However, each of us *can* exercise a good influence upon those closest to us – our families and friends, for example. Supernaturally, the influence goes far beyond what we see. Supernaturally, the good effect is something understood by faith – real in its work, the effort to be truly Christ-like in serving others, because we love God, which does set a good example and does encourage others to do likewise. This is to serve our neighbour as God has served us.

As God patiently corrects us, helps us and supports us, we should endeavour to do the same to our neighbour without rancour or pride. Curiously, we hardly flinch when we switch from chastising our neighbour one moment, to imploring God's mercy for ourselves in the very next. Were God as severe to us as we can be towards our neighbour, spouse, children, or enemies... we would shudder in fear.

Were we to humbly seek sanctity more earnestly, we too would assume this Christ-like role in the world according to our state in life, living in peace and joy despite inevitable sufferings in this world. This is the mark of charity that animates the Mystical Body of Christ and bonds the family of God: *...glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will* (Luke 2:14).

Christ came into the unwelcoming world to give us the gift of salvation, in order that God be glorified. The Blessed Virgin wilfully accepted to cooperate with her Divine Son as the Sorrowful Mother of the Crucified Redeemer, renounced by the sinful men for whom He died. Neither Our Lord nor His beloved Mother refused their roles of mercy and suffering for the good of sinners. St. Joseph, likewise, as *Patron* of the Holy Family, gives us a good example as the humble spouse