



My dear friends,

During these Christmas holidays, we remember that Nazareth is the environment in which Jesus grew up and spent the major part of his life. It is important to return to that theological place as to one's own home, where one goes to recover and recuperate, to free ourselves from modes of power, riches, status and auto-sufficiency. In order to find again the taste for simple things, to restore the interior life and return to gospel values. To get to know Jesus better.

I offer you two meditations.

The Petition is: Interior knowledge of Christ in order to love Him more and to follow him more closely.

Luke 2:19 "And Mary treasured...." She allowed herself to be touched and affected interiorly. Let ourselves also be affected. Contemplate Jesus with the eyes and faith of Mary, in her company. Rest your attention on Jesus. Allow yourself to be surprised and affected as Jesus let himself be affected by a people, a culture, a family, nature, work, the experience of God, his own growth...

In Nazareth Jesus learned the human experience of living "like an ordinary person," "as one among many," just like millions of people who live unacknowledged, insignificant, unknown ... Nevertheless, it was there that he experienced and learned what it is to be blessed (Mt. 5:1-12; Luke 6:20-22), the human experience of knowing where true joy can be found. True joy and spiritual peace is a freely given human experience of knowing where true joy can be found. True joy and spiritual peace is a freely given grace, a gift, altruistic, deep; it does not come as a result of the satisfaction of a peripheral desire, but brings the person to a place of interior harmony. It is passed on to others, it does not close me up within myself; it is humble, it does not come from a self-satisfied ego but opens toward the future, to love and to serve.

Slowly go through the beatitudes and see them reflected in the life of Jesus (his life in Nazareth and his public life). Up to what point do I trust the pledge of Jesus in regard to happiness and true joy (the pearl, the treasure Mt 13:44-46). Where do I look for happiness, joy? What is my experience of the beatitudes in my life, when have I been happiest?

My friends, may Christmas be more than a memory, may it be a rebirthing of Christ in us. May we rejoice anew in the presence of divinity contained within each of us.

Love, Blessings, Prayers and best wishes for Christmas and 2019.

Bishop Margaret B. Vertue