



"They are trees planted by streams of water; they bear fruit; their leaves do not wither; in all that they do they prosper." Ps 1:3

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The Theme for 2011: Walk by the Spirit (Rom 8:4)

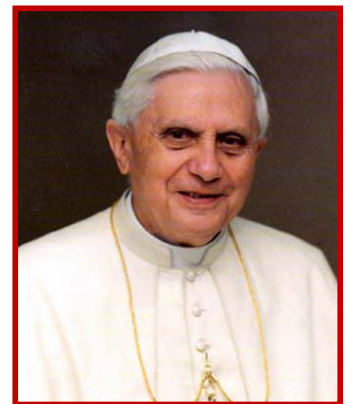
CONTENTS

- *Pope's Message.*
- *Testimony.*
- *The Nativity.*
- *Two Revolutionaries.*
- *Who is Jesus to me?*
- *Children's Bible Quiz #53.*
- *Answers to Bible Quiz #52.*
- *A Question.*
- *Who Started Christmas?*
- *Fear of God.*
- *Smile Awhile.*

Pope's three Wishes for Christmas

VATICAN CITY, 9 DEC 2011 (VIS) - Late Wednesday afternoon, 7 December, thanks to a "tablet" connected to the power grid, Benedict XVI lit the largest Christmas tree in the world from the papal apartments. This electronic "tree" is located in the Italian town of Gubbio. Before flipping the switch he addressed a few words - by television - to those attending the ceremony.

"Before lighting the tree", he said, "I would like to express three wishes. This Christmas tree is formed on the slopes of Mt. Ingino at whose summit is



found the basilica of Gubbio's patron saint, St. Ubaldo. When we look at it our eyes are lifted up, raised toward the sky, toward the world of God".

"My first wish, therefore, is that our gaze, that of our minds and our hearts, not rest only on the horizon of this world, on its material things, but that it in some way, like this tree that tends upward, be directed toward God. God never forgets us but He also asks that we don't forget Him".

"The Gospel recounts that, on the holy night of Christ's birth, a light enveloped the shepherds, announcing a great joy to them: the birth of Jesus, the one who brings us light, or better, the One who is the true light that illuminates all. The great tree that I

will light up shortly overlooks the city of Gubbio and will illuminate the darkness of the night with its light".

"My second wish is that we recall that we also need a light to illumine the path of our lives and to give us hope, especially in this time in which we feel so greatly the weight of difficulties, of problems, of suffering, and it seems that we are enshrouded in a veil of darkness. But what light can truly illuminate our hearts and give us a firm and sure hope? It is the Child whom we contemplate on Christmas, in a poor and humble manger, because He is the Lord who draws near to each of us and asks that we receive Him anew in our lives, asks us to want Him, to trust in Him, to feel His presence, that He is accompanying us, sustaining us, and helping us".

"But this great tree is formed of many lights. My final wish is that each of us contributes something of that light to the spheres in which we live: our families, our jobs, our neighborhoods, towns, and cities. That each of us be a light for those who are at our sides; that we leave aside the selfishness that, so often, closes our hearts and leads us to think only of ourselves; that we may pay greater attention to others, that we may love them more. Any small gesture of goodness is like one of the lights of this great tree: together with other lights it illuminates the darkness of the night, even of the darkest night".

Submitted by Richard Mascarenhas

Testimony by Gladys Staines - Is it easy to Forgive?

Because He lives, I can face tomorrow - Singing through the difficult moments.

At the age of 16, I went to a school camp where we learnt the song "I know who holds the future and He guides me with His hand. With God, things don't just happen, everything by Him is planned." This was the beginning of my placing problems in His hands. Later I learnt the song "Because He lives I can face tomorrow, because He lives all fear is gone, Because I know He holds the future and life is worth the living just because He Lives."

Coming To India

As I left Australia, knowing that God had called me to be His servant overseas, I knew that no matter what happened, He would be with me. During my preparation time, I recall once making a public statement "I don't know what the future holds, but I know who holds the future." I also remember another time thinking about my future, including all the scary things; but God spoke to me very clearly, "The safest

place to be in is the will of God." I have seen it proved over the years.

India was for me a new country with a different language, culture, custom, and food, and it was not an easy experience. At times, it was extremely challenging, but having the assurance that this was where God wanted me, helped me through in those early days. Through different experiences, I have learned to trust Him - like, when finances were low, we prayed. Before my marriage to Graham, I had come to India with a team of 3 foreign girls. We were on our own, driving a van, and we got into a traffic block at an interstate border crossing - some of you might know the long line ups at the toll booths. We prayed, 'God, please put your angels around us to protect us from any danger.' We had only helpful people who came near our van and guided us through the jammed traffic. In retrospect, that was a marvellous experience. We knew then that God was with us and was real.

God's word assures us, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Heb 13:5). He has not forgotten us, though we may, at times, feel like He has. Though we know all of these things in our mind, yet when the testing comes, we feel as though the world around us is collapsing.

On 23rd January 1999, I got the news that my husband Graham and two sons Philip, 10, and Timothy, 6, had been killed in Manoharpur village in Keonjhar district, Orissa. It was a terrible feeling.

Forgive One Another

I used to pray for China and had read earlier in some magazines that one of the reasons that the Church in China has grown was because the Christians who were persecuted had forgiven those who persecuted them. During the Christmas of 1998 many churches in Gujarat were burned and the Christians went through a lot of terror and anxiety. I remember making the statement to my staff just before Graham went to the camp that Christians must learn to forgive. Little did I know then that something like this would happen to my family.

A few days before the tragic incident in one of my daily readings, I had read about Abraham being asked to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. The question was put, if illness or something happened, would I be willing to offer that difficulty to God or would I fight with Him? After a lot of consideration, with a heavy heart I told the Lord that I would be willing. I never dreamt that anything like this would happen. It is said that it is not our actions that count, but our reactions in a time of difficulty. God enabled me to respond in the way I did. God gave me the words to forgive those who had killed my family members. I knew that it was not an accident. I

knew without even knowing the details that this had been a deliberate action. That is why those who did this needed to be forgiven. Even in those words the healing started to flow into my own life. In Scripture, there are many instances wherein we are asked to forgive. In Ephesians 4.32, at the end of the teaching, on the way we should live, are the words, "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

If we are unwilling to forgive the person who has wronged us in any way, large or small, then we allow bitterness to come into our relationships and friendships, and we are the ones most affected. Forgiveness does not mean that we are free of the consequences of what has happened. Forgiving the murderers of my husband and sons has not brought my family back, but that action has given me peace in the midst of sorrow. It does not mean that the murderers should not face the consequences of their actions - we will always face the consequences of our actions.

Jesus, the Glory of My Life

In retrospect, as I look back over the past years I wonder how I ever coped during the first year, let alone later. During the first year, I had hundreds of people who came to visit me, to give condolences as well as to interview me, I found that God enabled me to meet each person and I, in turn, was often able to encourage those who came to encourage me. I was able to share the hope that I have in Jesus Christ. I want Jesus to be given the glory in my life - that through my life and testimony Jesus can be seen.

For a stone to let the light shine through, it needs to be highly polished. There is another song that I want to share with you; I learnt it 17 years ago. "Jesus takes me as I am, I can come no other way, Take me deeper into you, and Make my flesh life melt away. Make me as a precious stone, crystal clear, and finely honed, Life of Jesus shining through, giving glory back to you."

God Is In Control

Many a time when I have been, humanly speaking, at the end of my resources, I have found that God in His grace has supplied what I needed - strength for the next moment, the next decision, or the next meeting. II Corinthians 12:9 says "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness . . ." At times, when all around seems tough and the pain inside is so deep (as I think of my family), yet still there is a secure reassurance that God is in control. I know that one day I am going to meet Graham, Philip, and Timothy again, in heaven, because He has promised that He will come back again, and that He has gone to prepare a place for us (John 14:3). Presently they are with Jesus. What a hope we have! They have not just died and are lost, they are rejoicing in the very Presence of God Himself.

Let me share with you something that still cheers me. When He was on earth Jesus went hungry and thirsty. He was tempted and He knew sorrow. Jesus knows what we go through. Last year, Esther and I needed a visa to travel to a neighbouring country. We had a time frame in which it needed to be done. It looked impossible, but at the last moment it worked out wonderfully. We knew that God was in control.

We were at another time to travel on a train; we had an unconfirmed ticket for the AC chair car, but were told to board the train anyway. There was not one seat available, yet through this inconvenience, I was able to talk to people and ended up making friends with many people and was even offered a seat. I still marvel at that. At times, I have felt as though I was walking through the jungle and having to cut a path as I went. Yet, Jesus was with me.

Jesus Is Alive

He hears our prayers; He is with us day after day in the large and small things. Because He (Jesus) lives I CAN face tomorrow and so can you.

Gladys Staines

The Nativity

The nativity- don't we become filled with wonder and awe and exclaim "Wow", when we ponder on the nativity? How can a young woman, however Committed or Devoted she may be to God, be or remain so cool, in such circumstances, while giving birth to a child?

At least ONE word or thought of discomfort or dissatisfaction or unbearable-ness or anger or worry, can't it be expected from her? Would it be a sin? Would it be considered as wrong? In excruciating cold, sitting on a donkey, which is moving this way and that while walking, for many hours in the state of full pregnancy, pain & fatigue increasing moment by moment and not disclosing the real measure of her suffering to her caring husband.

She had great expectations at each knocked door, "Ah! Now I can lie down **somewhere**" and then to face heartless refusal many times. And at last a dirty, stinking place where animals are very close to one self! We would have cried and grumbled; starting with God himself, then our husband, animals also won't be spared plus groaning loudly. But, that night, at Bethlehem, no one knew that someone has any problem at all. The shepherds only heard "Halleluiah" plus the good news of a Saviour for them.

When we visited the birth place of Jesus in the Holy Land how much did we feel humbled! I think all the time she went through all these experiences and Labour pain she was fulfilling her role as co-sufferer and co-saviour. God the saviour was given birth to by the WOMAN co-saviour. We have enough knowledge about how

the physical, mental and spiritual life of a child or human being is affected by the mother's experiences during her pregnancy and child birth. I think Jesus was born as the one and only **perfect child** in every way because Mother Mary was always filled with grace, contemplating about God, satisfied, peaceful and joyful in facing whatever came into her life.

With much awe and desire I ask Mama Mary, "Can I, when I go through suffering, be so patient, so loving, so peaceful, and so free from grumbling, complaints or worry. So filled with grace - remembering that I am co-operating in God's salvation? It is the wish of my life!

Sisy Jacob

The Two Revolutionaries

Mt. 27:38 says, "Two revolutionaries were crucified with him..." and Mk. 15:27 say, "With him they crucified two revolutionaries..." However Lk. 23:39 says, "Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying..." and Jn. 19:18 says, "There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side..." (The New American Bible 2005)

It is unsure whether the persons hanged on either side of Jesus were criminals or revolutionaries. If some suppositions are made, a message can be deciphered.

If the fact that the two persons were revolutionaries is supposed, a question that can arise in one's mind will be – "What did they want a revolution for?" The answer is not known. It can be deciphered if some further assumptions are made.

Mt. 27:44 says, "The revolutionaries who were crucified with him also kept abusing him in the same way." Mk. 15:32 also says, "...Those who were crucified with him also kept abusing him." But Lk. 23:39-43 says, "Now one of the criminals hanging there reviled Jesus, saying, 'Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us.' The other, however, rebuking him, said in reply, 'Have you no fear of God, for you are subject to the same condemnation? And indeed, we have been condemned justly; for the sentence we received corresponds to our crimes, but this man has done nothing criminal.' Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' He replied to him, 'Amen, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.'" (The New American Bible 2005)

If the revolutionaries wanted a revolution for a not-very-good cause, one can assume that, they got the punishment they deserved. If, however one of them wanted a revolution for a good cause and the other one for a not-good cause, then the one who had the good reason might have had revolutionary ideas similar to Jesus' teachings or different from them and Jesus, knowing the good intention he had in his mind might have rewarded him not only for believing that Jesus is the

Christ (which is, perhaps, why he asked Him to remember him when He went into His kingdom) and asking Him what he asked according to the Gospel of Luke but also for the good cause he wanted a revolution for. But if both of them might have wanted a great change in society for a good reason, both of them might either have committed some sin while seeking a revolution by accidentally killing someone or some people while striking (if they ever struck) or in some other way or might have been punished by those who punished Jesus.

If this last hypothesis is true, then if one stays close to Jesus and do what He wants even if it involves risking one's life in doing so, one can have the privilege of suffering the way he suffered. If one does not have the capacity to suffer this way, God can give him/her an opportunity to suffer, according to his/her ability, which will be as hard to suffer as it was for Him.

*****Please note:** This article is purely hypothetical since the message conveyed here is based on mere assumptions.

Amy Ann Jacob

Who is Jesus to Me?

This speech was delivered at the recent MIPC Recitation Competition

“This is my Son, the Beloved, listen to Him” Mt 3: 17, Mk 9:7 “I am the Way, the Truth & the Life, No one goes to the Father, except by me” Jn 14:6

Respected Judges, my dear friends, It's a great privilege to talk about Jesus in our life. Now I take this opportunity to talk about Jesus in few words. In Mt. 16:13-16, when Jesus asked his disciples “who do you say that I am?” Peter replied “You are the messiah the Son of the living God.”

The Bible says Jesus is the living God, the Holy One, the Saviour, the sovereign Lord, Light of the world, and the righteous Judge and so on... But who do we say Jesus is?

Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Jesus died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins so that we could be sinless in the eyes of God. If we do not receive the free gift of eternal life by experiencing the forgiveness achieved by Jesus, then we will receive the punishment we so justly deserve. Therefore, Jesus must become the Lord and Saviour of our lives. Jesus is the Head of the Church! We are his body parts. Therefore we have to continue his mission to the ends of the Earth! Now, who is Jesus to me?

Jesus is my God, He is my friend, I can talk to him anytime I want, He is my counsellor; Jesus is my Life; He is my healer because he has saved me from my sickness; He gives me strength thru his Holy Spirit; He is the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End; He is the King of Kings, Lord of Lords; He is the great I am; He is the Creator of all! He is Unmoved, Unchanged, Undefeated, and never undone!

He answers my prayers morning, noon and night. He knows what I need before I ask Him. He answers according to what is best for me. He supplies all my needs for the work He gives me. He is my Shepherd who leads me in the way everlasting. He restores my soul. He protects me when I walk in dangerous places. He is preparing a place for me where I will dwell with Him for ever and ever. He is my redeemer, my Saviour, He is my Guide, He is my Peace, He is my Joy, He is my Comfort, He is my Friend, He is my Hope, He is my Lord, He rules my life! I serve Him because His bond is love; His goal for me is abundant life. Every day is a blessing for me with Jesus!

I follow Him because He is the Wisdom of the wise, the Power of the powerful, the Ancient of Days, the Ruler of rulers, the Leader of leaders, and the Sovereign Lord of all that was and is and is to come.

He will never leave me, never forsake me, never mislead me, never forget me, never overlook me, and never cancel my appointment in His appointment book!

When I fall, He lifts me up! When I fail, He forgives! When I am weak, He is strong! When I am lost, He is the way! When I am afraid, He is my courage! When I stumble, He steadies me! When I am hurt, He heals me! When I am broken, He mends me! When I face problems, He comforts me! When I face death, He will carry me Home! I love the Lord and thank Him for all that he does in my life.

Yes I do love Jesus. For He is my source of existence and my Saviour. And He keeps me functioning each and every day! Without Him, I am nothing but with Him I can do all things. (Philippians 4:13)

Lord Jesus, help me to be your witness throughout my life. Make me an instrument of your love and spread the good news to the whole world. Help me to be like you more and more!

**I have decided to follow Jesus,
No turning back!**

Melita Janice Rodrigues

Children's Bible Quiz # 53

- 1: What was the name of Moses' brother?
- 2: Who rescued Moses from the reeds?
- 3: What did the Israelites borrow from their neighbours?
- 4: How many plagues did God send on Egypt?
- 5: What was the second plague?
- 6: What sea did the Israelites cross through to escape the Egyptians?
- 7: At what place did the Israelites arrive only to find the water was too bitter to drink, whereupon God caused it to become sweet?

Please submit your answers before Jan 21st 2012.

Answers to Bible Quiz # 52

1. Some Babylonians
2. 27 Meters High and 3 Meters Wide
3. Arioch
4. Interpreting dreams and visions
5. Azariah



Winners of Bible Quiz # 52

Relina Vas (12) Rahul Vas (15) Sneha Sequeira

A Question

QUESTION: Are we supposed to wear the rosary or the scapular? I see people wearing both and most people wearing only the rosary. I've heard that it is the scapular that we must wear and not the rosary.....*Amy Ann Jacob.*

ANSWER: You may wear a blessed Rosary as a sign of your Catholic Faith and also to protect you from harm and the evil works of satan. The Rosary should not, however, be worn merely as a trinket or as a fashion statement, because this is disrespectful to a Sacramental object. The Scapular has a special significance because Our Lady herself promised protection to all who wear her scapular faithfully and also remain in a state of grace.

Therefore, while it is more common and usual for Catholics to wear a blessed Scapular, it is quite all right to also wear a Rosary. In point of fact many religious orders wear the rosary attached to their Habits.....**The Editor.**

Who started Christmas?

This morning I heard a story on the radio of a woman who was out Christmas shopping with her two children.

After many hours of looking at row after row of toys and everything else imaginable. And after hours of hearing both her children asking for everything they saw on those many shelves, she finally made it to the elevator with her two kids.

She was feeling what so many of us feel during the holiday season time of the year. Overwhelming pressure to go to every party, every housewarming, taste all the holiday food and treats, getting that perfect gift for every single person on our shopping list, making sure we don't forget anyone on our card list, and the pressure of making sure we respond to everyone who sent us a card.

Finally the elevator doors opened and there was already a crowd in the elevator.

She pushed her way into the elevator and dragged her two kids in with her and all the bags of stuff. When the doors closed she couldn't take it anymore and stated,

"Whoever started this whole Christmas thing should be found, strung up and shot."

From the back of the elevator everyone heard a quiet calm voice respond,

"Don't worry we already crucified him."

For the rest of the trip down the elevator it was so quiet you could have heard a pin drop.

Don't forget this year to keep the One who started "this whole Christmas thing" in your every thought, deed, purchase, and word. If we all did it, just think of how different this whole world would be.

Fear of God

There are seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, but as I was going through each one, the gift that caught my attention was the 'Fear of God', as I could not comprehend its true meaning and I wanted to know more about it. At first, I found a lot of difficulties in my way as I had no idea on the subject whatsoever and had very little information regarding it. But God has helped me to overcome this challenge and here I am, today, to speak on this little known, but very important gift of the Holy Spirit, namely, Fear of God.

In today's times, God has become someone alien and a hindrance in the way of 21st century living. It is through moments like these, if it drives us to find the truth, will lead us into a better and closer relationship with God. For this, we need to have Fear of the Lord. This gift can also be translated as awe and wonder for him. Though we can approach God with the trust of little children, we are aware of his total majesty, unlimited power and desire for justice.

Basically, there are two types of fear of the Lord. The first is the Holy Fear of God, a fear because he is an awesome God beyond our comprehension and yet, very much, for and with us. We need to live with this happy kind of fear as he is our great, big, wonderful God and we do not want to hurt him. People who fear the Lord are fortunate because they know where to look for help and whom to trust. The Lord is their firm protection and strong support.

The second type of fear is the real fear of the Lord. We know that he is a just God who has promised to come again as a judge. This concept includes how much he hates sin and how we fear his judgement on our sins. It also describes God's discipline on his believers. Although done in love, it is still a fearful thing. As children, the fear of discipline from our parents, no doubt, prevented us from many wrongdoings. The same should be true in our relationship with God. We should fear his discipline, and hence, seek to live lives in a righteous way that pleases him.

We believers are not to be scared of God. We have no reason to be so. We have his promise that nothing can separate us from his love and that he will never forsake us. Fearing God means having a reverence for him that it has a great impact on the way we live our lives. It is all about respecting him, obeying him, submitting to his discipline and worshipping him.

So friends, I would request you to think about this precious gift of the Holy Spirit. Ask him to grant you this gift. With it, we can know the will of God in our lives and lead a holy life.

Wynola Williams: Participant - Elocution Competition

Smile Awhile

A teacher asked one of her pupils how he liked his new house.

“It’s great, Miss,” he replied. “I’ve got my own room.

So’s my sister and my brother. But poor old dad’s still got to sleep with mum.”

“My ancestry goes all the way back to Alexander the great,” said one guest to another, “and how far does your family go back?”

“I really don’t know,” replied the second, “All our records were lost in the flood.”



Wishing every member of
The Mary Immaculate Praise Community (MIPC)
and Your Families

*A Very Happy and Holy Christmas
&
A New Year Filled with Peace, Love, Joy & Prosperity*

May the Choicest Blessings of our Lord Jesus
Be with you and your family throughout this
Special Season of Grace and Happiness
With love, Prayers and Best Wishes,

THE CORE TEAM
&
THE OASIS MINISTRY



MIPC Prayer Meeting: Every Wednesday at 8:00 pm in the Parish Hall.
General Intercessory Meeting: Last Monday of every month at 8:00 pm.
Community Mass: Every Friday at 9.00 a.m. except the last Friday of the month.