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## “COME AND BEHOLD HIM, THE KING OF ANGELS”

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We all know the beautiful Christmas carol “*Adeste, fideles*.” Generations of people have sung it, over the centuries: “*Adeste, fideles, laeti, triumphantes. Venite, venite in Bethleem. Natum videte regem angelorum. Venite adoremus, venite adoremus. Venite adoremus Dominum.*” Very simple words, yet full of faith and enthusiasm. The English translation repeats the invitation: “O come, let us adore him. O come, let us adore him. O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord.”

### “MY LORD AND MY GOD”

To shepherds and wise men of yesterday and today, the same invitation is made, the invitation to worship Jesus as our God and Saviour. But then, where do we find this Jesus of Nazareth? The choir of angels is perhaps no longer above us, to tell us where to find Mary’s newborn child, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. The star that guided the wise men of the East to Bethlehem probably shines no longer through our nights; it has perhaps disappeared from our sight. Where can we find Jesus today, if we really want to go and worship him? And when we have found him, will we have the same response of faith as the Apostle Thomas: “My Lord and my God!” Ours is a hidden God, extremely modest, yet he took flesh, lived, and continues to live among us.

### MANY ADDRESSES

Far from having an unknown address, Jesus has thousands of addresses where we can find and meet him. The French poet Didier Rimaud sang: “There is someone we do not know, here among us. I hear footsteps at the door. It is him. All the poor need shelter for the night. I see hands reaching out for the table. It is him. Let us feed the poor, today. I see eyes that are filled with sorrow. It is him. Let us light a fire. Winter brings Jesus Christ.” As he did before, Jesus is to be found in the hungry and thirsty, the strangers, the sick, the needy, the imprisoned. Saint Vincent de Paul wrote: “God loves the poor, therefore he loves those who love the poor, because when we love someone very well, we also love that person’s friends and servants... Let us go, then! Let us go to the poor with a new-found love, let us seek out the poorest and most abandoned. Let us acknowledge before God that they are our Lords and Masters and that we are unworthy to give them our lowly service.” If we look for the address of these poor people, it is probably very close to us, very close to home... The liturgy sings: “Who is this God who loves us, children of the earth? Who, then is God, so needy, so great, so vulnerable? Who, then, is God that none can love without loving man? Who, then, is God who can be so hurt when man is hurt?”

### A FIRST HYMN

Saint John de Brébeuf composed his Huron Carol, the first Christmas hymn composed in New France. It is called *Jesus is Born*. This is how he proclaims the Good News: “Christians, take heart, Jesus the Saviour is born. The works of the Evil One are forever destroyed. When he sings of the wonders of his great temptations, do not listen! Listen to the news of the angel. Listen, ye faithful souls, and open your hearts. The Virgin in the stable holds in her arms the wonderful God-child. Three lost wise men from the East decipher the message in the heavens; the new star pursues them; they will follow the pilgrim star. Jesus has assured them that the star in the night, a star which never stops, will lead them to him through the radiant night. They are already on the road, they set out with joyful heart. To the Child resting in its little cradle, they humbly do homage, and offer gifts. Like them, O radiant hearts, ye Christians, let us follow in their footsteps: his love invites us,”

## FROM BETHLEHEM TO THE UPPER ROOM

In this year of the Eucharist, we are more than ever invited to encounter Jesus in the sacrament of the Eucharist. We need a faith as strong as that of the shepherds and wise men, to recognise him and worship him in the consecrated Bread and Wine. "*Ave, verum Corpus natum de Maria Virgine.*" A Latin hymn made the connection between Bethlehem and the Upper Room. "We worship you, true heart of the Lord, born of the Virgin Mary. You truly suffered, offered on the cross for our sake. Your pierced heart let flow water and blood. Be our viaticum in our struggle with death. O sweet Jesus, O good Jesus, O Jesus, son of Mary." When we join in the Eucharistic celebration, we encounter the great mystery of our faith: God the Father has so loved the world that He sent His beloved Son. Jesus, the Word of God, loved us so much that he gave up his life for us and shed his blood for all. He wanted the Memorial of his passion, death, and resurrection to be celebrated in his memory: "Do this in memory of me." This commandment cannot be separated from another which he taught his disciples: "Love one another as I have loved you."

## CHRISTMAS IS LOVE!

Care for the needy, welcoming the most unhappy, celebrating the Good News of the birth of Jesus, the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, our gathering together, and our listening to the Word of God are just so many faces of the great Christmas mystery. It is a mystery of love which reaches out to us even today, in our very lives. Jesus finding a place in the midst of humankind happened through his being part of a family. Are we sufficiently aware of the consequences of this? Jesus comes into our own families to tell us about the riches of all these ties we are called to develop: ties of love and mutual help, and ties of friendship and forgiveness. These ties help us grow in life because they are bearers of hope and promise. May these celebrations of Christmas and the New Year help us grow in faith in Christ Jesus who took the initiative to come and dwell among us! In welcoming him in the Eucharist, may we show our families and communities that we are swaddled by the living God! "O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!"

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