

# *Christmas Readings*

*2024*



*From the Judeo - Christian Scriptures  
and the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg*



# The Story of Christmas: “Humility”

## *Introduction*

One of the most powerful facets of the Christmas story is its unpretentious simplicity. We know that the God of heaven and earth could have chosen to be born wherever He wanted, and in whatever surroundings He decided. And yet He elected to be born in the most humble of circumstances, surrounded, for the most part, by the common folk of the day. Yes, He was attended by kings from the East, but the fact that He was born in a stable, cared for by a carpenter and his wife, and visited by shepherds, attests to the fact that the things of this world are not most important; rather, this story is about the supremacy of the spirit.

This year’s readings are gathered around the theme of humility. Humility is the quality of spiritual life that most allows the Lord to do what He came on earth to do for us, and that is, to lift us up in spirit and bless us with heavenly states of mind, heart, and life, as He leads us onward toward heaven.

This year’s final reading compares the Word of God to a treasure chest filled with precious jewels. Truly there are many facets of spiritual life that shine forth from the familiar stories of Scripture, and sparkle with meaning for our lives. One of our hopes is that you will discover some of these jewels within this year’s set of readings, particularly as they relate to the theme of humility.

Format: Each daily reading in this booklet features part of the Christmas story, followed by commentary from the 18th Century theologian, Emanuel Swedenborg. Each reading and commentary touches on one part of the divine birth in us. At the end of the readings for each day is a set of reflections, together with some questions for consideration. There are twenty-six readings in all, designed to carry you from December 1st through Christmas day, with a reading for the day after, looking forward into the new year. Our hope is that these readings, together with worship services and religious/church events available throughout the world, will provide a sense of uplift and spiritual renewal in your life, and that you will open up to the Lord in new ways, as you continue on the pathway of humility.



# 1

## **“To Heal the Brokenhearted”**


### **A Recognition of Our Need for His Help**

**December 1**

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me,  
Because the Lord has anointed Me  
To preach good tidings to the poor;  
He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to the captives,  
And the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord,  
And the day of vengeance of our God;  
To comfort all who mourn,  
To console those who mourn in Zion,  
To give them beauty for ashes,  
The oil of joy for mourning,  
The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;  
That they may be called trees of righteousness,  
The planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified.”  
(Isaiah 61:1-3)

These things (above) are said of the Lord. “The poor” to whom Jehovah has anointed Him to preach good tidings, refers to those who are in few truths, and yet desire truths that their soul may be sustained by them. The “broken in heart” stand for those who as a consequence are in grief.  
(Apocalypse Explained 811.17; Cf. Luke 4:16-21)

Many people in ancient times, and following them some people today, have ascribed feelings and affections to the heart, and have also assigned to it their abode. It has accordingly come into common speech to speak of a brave heart and a timid one, a happy heart and a sor-rowful one, a soft heart and a hard one, a big heart and a petty one, a whole heart and a broken one. The Word of God employs similar expressions, because the Word was written in terms of earthly things that correspond to spiritual ones.  
(Divine Love and Wisdom 378)



**Reflection:** *The Lord says, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart—these, O God, You will not despise” (Psalm 51:17). In the context of today’s readings, this is not talking about the Lord wanting or needing us to be sad; rather, He’s inviting us humbly to recognise our need for His help.*

*What are one or two recent experiences that have caused you to see or feel this need in yourself? What is one area in your life in which you “mourn” and need to be comforted, or feel pain and desire the Lord’s loving care to lift you up? What are one or two ways in which He could do these things?*

**Notes:**

# 2

## **“They Were Both Righteous before God” A Willingness to be Guided by the Lord December 2**

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (Luke 1:5-6)

Innocence consists in acknowledging that all truths and forms of goodness come from the Lord, and that none at all come from the human self; thus it consists in wishing to be led by the Lord and not by one's self. (Secrets of Heaven 10210)

Those who are in a state of innocence wish to be led by the Lord and not by themselves. They love everything that is good and find delight in everything that is true. They live content with what is their own, whether it be little or much, because they know that they receive just as much as is good for them—those receiving little for whom a little is useful, and those receiving much for whom much is useful. Also, they acknowledge that they do not them-selves know what is good for them, the Lord alone know-ing this, who looks in all things that He provides to what is eternal. They love nothing so much as to be led by the Lord, attributing all things they receive to Him. They are kept apart from what is selfish, and to the extent that they are kept apart from this, the Lord flows into them. As a consequence, whatever they hear from the Lord—whether through His Word or by means of preaching—they do not store up in their memory, but instantly obey it, that is, will it and do it. These for the most part appear outwardly simple, but inwardly they are wise and prudent. (Heaven and Hell 278)

In the Word of God “humbling yourself” has to do with obedience. (Secrets of Heaven 7640)

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**Reflection:** *Humility shows itself in different ways. One of the readings for today suggests that “innocence” is a willingness to depend on the Lord for everything that is good. The people described in that reading are angels in heaven. They are so open to the Lord’s leadership that it’s almost hard to imagine that they started out as normal people like us. Yet that description invites a number of questions: In what way(s) can you be more accepting of events and circumstances in your life?*

*What is one way that you can open yourself up to blessings that the Lord wants to give? What are one or two ways that you can be guided by the Lord today?*

**Notes:**

# 3

## **“Do Not be Afraid”**

### **Holy Fear**

#### **December 3**


So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, an angel of the Lord appeared to him. The angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.”

(Luke 1:8,11-12,14)

Here is the orderly way in which things are done in heaven and therefore on earth, specifically the way things are done when angels are about to arrive: A spirit is sent on ahead to prepare the way. The spirit then produces a feeling of fear in people, and advises them to receive the angels in a kindly manner. The spirit is present through-out the visit preparing the mind and trying to forestall anything disrespectful. All of this is reminiscent of John the Baptist, that in keeping with heavenly order he was sent on ahead to proclaim the Lord's Coming and to prepare the way for Him to be received respectfully, as stated in Luke 1:17. (Secrets of Heaven 8028)

“Fear” is of two kinds: fear in what is not sacred, and fear in what is sacred. Fear in what is sacred is the fear in which are the good. This fear is called reverential fear, and it’s the result of a person's wonder at and longing for what is divine; also the result of his or her love. The fear of love is a fear of injuring the Lord in any way, or of injuring the neighbour in any way, thus of injuring what is good and true in any way, and consequently of injuring the sacred things of love and faith and the consequent worship. (Secrets of Heaven 3718)





The angel said to Zacharias, “Do not be afraid.” By “do not be afraid” is meant resuscitation, and then adoration from deepest humility.

(Apocalypse Revealed 56)

“To rejoice and be glad” means to experience delight of heart and soul.

(Apocalypse Revealed 507)

***Reflection:*** *The readings for today begin with a person being “afraid” in the normal sense of the word (i.e., scared, frightened) and they end with some reflections on a healthy kind of fear—fear of doing harm to the Lord and/or your neighbour. Think for a minute of one key relationship that you care about.*

*What is one way that you fear doing harm to that relationship? What is one way that you could conceivably harm your relationship with the Lord? What can you do to avoid each of these things this Christmas season? What impact will it have on these relationships if you succeed?*

**Notes:**

# 4

## **“Your Prayer is Heard” Humble Prayers to the Lord**

### **December 4**

The angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard."  
(Luke 1:13)

It is common, in all worship of the Divine, that people should first will, desire, and pray, and the Lord then answers, informs, and does; otherwise they do not receive anything divine. We frequently read in the Word of God that the Lord answers when people call and cry out; also, that He gives when they ask. But yet the Lord gives them to ask, and what to ask. Therefore the Lord knows it beforehand. But still, the Lord wills that they should first ask, to the end that they may do it as if from themselves, and thus that it should become their own. Otherwise, if the petition itself were not from the Lord, it would not be said in those places that “they should receive whatever they ask.”  
(Apocalypse Revealed 376)

When we are in a life of goodwill, we are constantly praying, if not with the mouth yet with the heart. For that which belongs to love is constantly in our thought, even when we are unconscious of it.  
(Apocalypse Explained 325.12)

To those who are in a life of love and goodwill it is given from the Lord what they are to ask. Therefore they ask nothing but what is good, and that is done for them.  
(Apocalypse Explained 325.8)

In prayer, when inspired by God, there is always the thought and belief that the Lord alone knows whether what is sought will be beneficial or not. Therefore the one who prays leaves the Lord to decide whether to listen to what he or she asks for, then accordingly he pleads that the Lord’s will may be done, not his own.  
(Secrets of Heaven 8179.3)

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**Reflection:** *Prayer is a common part of many of our lives. One of the beauties of today's readings is that they expand our view from actual prayers that we offer to the silent longings of our hearts. These longings are also felt and perceived by the Lord in heaven.*

*What are one or two things that you most long for in life—good things that the Lord may also want for you? Do you believe that the Lord can and even will give these things to you? Please explain. Take a moment to pray to the Lord for these things. (You can offer your prayer in writing, or record it when finished.)*

**Notes:**

# 5

## **“How Shall I Know This?”**

### **Affirmative Doubt and Negative Doubt**

#### **December 5**

And Zacharias said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.” And the angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.” And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless.

(Luke 1:18-22)

People may know that in which they are, but they cannot know that in which they are not. If from description or from thinking about it they know something in which they are not, they nevertheless know of it merely as of something in the dark, and there remains some doubt about it, so that they do not see anything in the light and free from doubt until they are actually in it.

(Doctrine of Life 76)

As has been stated, temptations (or spiritual conflicts) involve feelings of doubt regarding the Lord's presence and mercy, and also regarding His salvation. But good spirits and angels from the Lord in every way disperse that doubting attitude, all the time preserving a feeling of hope, and in the end strengthening an affirmative outlook. After temptation is over, there are further states of truth and goodness to which our thoughts can subsequently be turned by the Lord.

(Secrets of Heaven 2338, 2334.1)

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**Reflection:** *The readings for today make two interesting points: First, we can't really know what any new state of mind or life will feel like until we're actually in it. Second, we're called to remain affirmative to what the Lord offers. Our readings this year are gathered around the theme of humility, so let's focus on that. Like the angel visiting Zacharias, the Lord sends messages to us through His Word, through intuition, perception, prayer, etc. He says in effect, "Trust Me, and I will bring it to pass." But like Zacharias' disbelief, there is a part of us that may react against that kind of humility, making it difficult to achieve.*

*What are one or two thoughts that you have about humility? What is one way that you can be more humble today, in the early days of the Christmas season?*

**Notes:**



# 6

## **“He Departed to His Own House”**

### **Humble Actions**

#### **December 6**

So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house.  
(Luke 1:23)

A life of charity is to will well and do well to the neighbour; to act in every work and every duty from justice and equity, and also from goodness and truth. In a word, the life of charity consists in performing useful services. Worship of the Divine consists primarily in such a life, and secondarily in a life of piety. The life of charity is the primary thing, and such as this is, such is the life of piety.  
(Apocalypse Explained 325.4)

Worship does not consist in prayers and in external devotion, but in a life of goodwill and good action. Prayers are only its outward features, for they proceed from us through our mouth. Consequently prayers are such as we ourselves are in respect to life. In each thing that we utter there is desire, and every person, spirit, and angel is her or his own desire, for each one's desire is his life. It is the desire itself that speaks, and not the person with-out it. Therefore such as the desire is, such is the pray-ing. Spiritual desire is what is called goodwill toward the neighbour. To be in that desire is true worship. Praying is what proceeds from it. From this it is clear that those who place all worship of the Divine in oral piety, and not in practical piety, err greatly. Practical piety (again) is to act in every work and in every duty from honesty and righteousness, and also from justice and equity, and this because it is commanded by the Lord in the Word. In this way people look to heaven and to the Lord in every work, and in this way they are linked to Him.  
(Apocalypse Explained 325.3-4)

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**Reflection:** *Continuing on the theme of humility, there's something telling about Zacharias going home, having had an experience which contained a personal reprimand, and explaining it all (non-verbally) to his wife. That alone would have been a humbling experience. But the readings for today also present a picture of returning from worship to our normal lives. It reminds us that worship is supposed to be a support for the ways we choose to live. It is easy for us to associate humility merely with outward worship, in that we bow before the Lord in prayer and so on. But the message today is that real worship involves doing what is before us to the best of our ability. True humility, then, involves our willingness to carry our spiritual devotions into the day-to-day events and details of our lives.*

*How can you be more humble in this way today?*

**Notes:**

# 7

## **“Thus Has the Lord Dealt with Me” Acknowledging the Lord’s Blessings in Our Lives**

### **December 7**

Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, “Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.”  
(Luke 1:24-25)

Being humble consists, in part, in acknowledging that everything living and everything good come from the Lord. The more we acknowledge these things, not just with the lips but in our hearts, the more humility we have; and consequently the more adoration—which is true worship—also the more love and goodwill, and the more happiness.

(Secrets of Heaven 1153.2)

A “self” of innocence consists in knowing, acknowledging, and believing, not with the lips but with the heart, that everything good originates in the Lord. When we confess and believe this in our hearts, the Lord flows in with goodness and truth and instills a heavenly self into us which is bright and shining. None of us can possibly be truly humble unless that acknowledgement and belief are present in our hearts.

(Secrets of Heaven 3994.1)

People cannot have humility or consequently accept the Lord's mercy (for mercy can enter only where there is humility, that is, into a humble heart) unless they acknowledge that the Lord is the source of all goodness.

(Secrets of Heaven 5758.2)

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**Reflection:** *“Thus has the Lord dealt with me....” Within these words is an acknowledgment that the Lord is the source of a great blessing in Elizabeth’s life. Sometimes the blessings we receive aren’t quite so evident or so easily attributable to the Lord. But the Lord hopes we will acknowledge His hand in the good things that happen in our lives.*

*What are one or two blessings that you are grateful for in your life?*

*If your heart and soul could speak, what would they say to the Lord on account of these blessings?*

**Notes:**

# 8

## **“You Have Found Favour with God” Openness to the Lord’s Messages**

**December 8**

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. And having come in, the an-gel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favoured one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!” But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:26-33)

The virgin of whom the Lord was born symbolises the church as to an affection for truth. A genuine affection for truth consists in willing and desiring to know the real truths of faith, with a view to putting them to good use, and for the sake of the life one should lead. Those with a genuine affection for truth examine the Scriptures and pray to the Lord for enlightenment; and when they receive it, their hearts rejoice. (God the Saviour 37; Secrets of Heaven 8993.3-4)

Divine truth, which is the Word of God, can only be with those who are in a spiritual affection for truth. Spiritual affection for truth consists in loving the truth itself, and esteeming it above every form of goodness in the world, be-cause through it we have eternal life. The only means by which eternal life is implanted in us are truths, consequently the Lord’s Word, for through the Word the Lord teaches truths. (Apoc. Ex. 444.10)



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**Reflection:** *The readings for today suggest that the annunciation to Mary is symbolic of a desire for truth in life. That symbolism can seem abstract. But what is being addressed is our openness to all that the Lord's Word has to offer. Like the angel messenger who was sent to Mary, the Lord comes to us with wonderful promises for our lives—if we can remain open to them, and if we can humbly submit ourselves to them.*

*What are one or two promises that you hear in the pages of Scripture—promises that are meaningful and even precious to you?*

*How have these promises influenced you, guided you, and impacted your life for good?*

**Notes:**

# 9

## **“That Holy One Will Be Called the Son of God” — Belief in the Lord**


### **December 9**

Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.” (Luke 1:34-37)

The question arises, “What is the first principle of faith in the Lord?” The answer is, “Acknowledgment that He is the Son of God.” This is faith in its origin. (True Christian Religion 342)

When the Lord was on earth He healed people, and He often did so according to their faith. The reason is that the first and primary thing of the church then to be established was to believe that the Lord is God Almighty, and that He has power to heal and save. Without that faith no church can be established, either collectively or within an individual. This faith constitutes the beginning of life from God with us. (Apocalypse Ex. 815.3; Secrets of Heaven 10083.6)

Jesus said to a father whose son was possessed, “If you can believe, all things are possible to those who believe.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” Then Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “You deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!” Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, “He is dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. (Mark 9:23-27)



**Reflection:** *Worry is a part of many of our lives. There's a part of us that wants to be trusting, and not to fret too much about things. But for many of us that isn't an easy task. The Christmas season—with all its activities and expectations—can itself be a source of anxiety; and yet it's intended to be a peaceful time.*

*What are one or two ways in which you can have the trusting attitude expressed by Mary when she said, "Let it be to me according to your word"? How can you experience peace today, as part of the Christmas season?*

**Notes:**

# 10

## **“Behold the Maidservant of the Lord” Trust in the Lord’s Providence**

**December 10**

Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:38)

Innocence is a willingness to be led by the Lord.  
(Heaven and Hell 281)

Those who trust in the Divine are not anxious, let alone worried, when they give thought to the morrow. They remain even-tempered whether or not they realise desires, and they do not grieve over loss; they are content with their lot. If they become wealthy they do not become infatuated with wealth; if they are promoted to important positions they do not consider themselves worthier than others. If they become poor they are not made miserable either; if lowly in status they do not feel downcast. They know that for those who trust in the Divine all things are moving toward an everlasting state of happiness, and that no matter what happens at any time to them, it contributes to that state. It should be recognised that divine providence is overall, that is, it is present within the smallest details of all, and that people in the stream of providence are being carried along constantly toward happier things, whatever appearance the means may present. Those in the stream of providence are people who trust in the Divine and ascribe every-thing to Him. (Secrets of Heaven 8478.3-4)

Peace holds within itself trust in the Lord, the trust that He governs all things and provides all things, and that He leads towards an end that is good. When people believe these things about Him they are at peace, since they then fear nothing, and no anxiety about things to come disturbs them.  
(Secrets of Heaven 8455.1)

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**Reflection:** *Worry is a part of many of our lives. There's a part of us that wants to be trusting, and not to fret too much about things. But for many of us that isn't an easy task. The Christmas season—with all its activities and expectations—can itself be a source of anxiety; and yet it's intended to be a peaceful time.*

*What are one or two ways in which you can have the trusting attitude expressed by Mary when she said, "Let it be to me according to your word"?*

*How can you experience peace today, as part of the Christmas season?*

**Notes:**



# 11

## **“He Has Exalted the Lowly”**

### **Lifting our Spirits**

#### **December 11**

And Mary said: “My soul magnifies the Lord,  
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour.  
For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant;  
For behold, henceforth all generations will call me  
blessed.

For He who is mighty has done great things for me,  
And holy is His name.

And His mercy is on those who fear Him  
From generation to generation.

He has shown strength with His arm;  
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their  
hearts.

He has put down the mighty from their thrones,  
And exalted the lowly.


He has filled the hungry with good things,  
And the rich He has sent away empty.”

(Luke 1:46-53)

Human beings have been created in such a way that they can look upward or above themselves, and also downward or below themselves. Looking above self is being raised by the Lord to a higher level, for nobody can look above self unless he or she is raised to a higher level by Him who is above. But looking below self is of human origin, since people do not in that case allow themselves to be raised up.

(Secrets of Heaven 7814, 7816)

True adoration or humility of heart entails an acknowledgement of oneself as being nothing but uncleanness, and at the same time an acknowledgement of the Lord’s infinite mercy towards such. When these acknowledgements are fixed in the mind, the mind itself casts itself downward. Nor does it raise itself until raised up by the Lord, as happens in all true humility. This is accompanied by a perception that such raising up is of the Lord's mercy. (Secrets of Heaven 1999)



**Reflection:** *Mary's words of praise to the Lord encapsulate many things, but the central theme is one of being raised up by Him. The Lord had done great things for Mary. He had shown her mercy and strength. He had scattered the "proud," put down the "mighty," exalted the "lowly," filled the "hungry," and sent the "rich" away empty. In similar ways, the Lord seeks to raise us up to new spiritual heights. He seeks to bless our lives in wonderful ways. And yet He can do these things only to the extent that we truly want what He has to offer. This is what opening ourselves up to Him means.*

*When do you feel the most uplifted by the Lord?  
How can you experience this kind of uplift today, as part of the Christmas season?*

**Notes:**

# 12

## **“His Name is John” — Submitting Ourselves to the Lord’s Way**

**December 12**

Now Elizabeth’s full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbours and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her. So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, “No; he shall be called John.” But they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name.” So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, “His name is John.” So they all marvelled. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, “What kind of child will this be?” And the hand of the Lord was with him. (Luke 1:57-66)

The words of Scripture, “a son eight days old,” mean any beginning whatever toward purification. “The eighth day,” specifically, means that spiritual purification ought to go on all the time, and so always to be taking place as if from a new beginning. (Secrets of Heaven 2044)

For the external part of us to be brought into true order, it must become subordinate to what is internal. It is sub-ordinate when it obeys. (Secrets of Heaven 9708)

The Lord desires our total submission so that He can make us blissful and happy. He does not want us to be partly our own person and partly His, for then there are two masters whom we cannot serve simultaneously. (Secrets of Heaven 6138:2)

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**Reflection:** *When considering the subject of humility, part of the Lord's calling is to recognise and acknowledge the negative parts of ourselves. Zacharias learned a lesson that was important for him to learn: When he fully obeyed the Lord, his ability to speak was restored. There are parts of us that want to do what the Lord says, and parts of us that may hold back. One of the messages of Christmas is that the Lord works to lead us toward Himself and away from those parts of us that may resist.*

*Is there something that you are willing to let go of this Christmas which would represent a step for-ward toward total submission to the Lord?*

**Notes:**

# 13

## **“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel” Praising God from the Heart**

**December 13**

Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham:

To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;

For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”  
(Luke 1:61-76)

The words of Scripture, “to give praise to God,” mean to confess Him, and from confession of heart to worship Him.

(Apocalypse Explained 1210)

The words of Scripture, “singing a song,” mean ascribing glory to the Lord. In the Church of ancient times, and subsequently in the Jewish Church, songs were prophetic. Their theme was the Lord, in particular His coming into the world and His deliverance of faithful believers. They contained an ascription of glory to the Lord, that is, praise of Him from gladness of heart. For gladness of heart is expressed primarily through singing. The gladness in singing is so to speak a spontaneous eruption into sound.

(Secrets of Heaven 8261)

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**Reflection:** *Zacharias' words weren't a song per se, but they were words of praise. As such, they remind us of the songs we sing in church services or other religious gatherings. Consider some of the different spiritual songs that you know. Notice how many of them talk about the greatness of the Lord, His deliverance and majesty, and so on. Think about one or another of your favourite Christmas carols and ask yourself, "What is this song really saying?" How can that sentiment, idea, or heavenly reality become part of your reality today?*

**Notes:**

# 14

## **“Being a Just Person” Treating Others with Respect**

**December 14**

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

(Matthew 1:18-23)

Heavenly love consists in loving what is good, honest, and just, because it is good, honest, and just, and in doing this from that love. Those who have this love have a life of goodness, honesty, and justice. This is heavenly life.

(Secrets of Heaven 481.1)

The Lord’s presence with a person is in what is good, and therefore in what is just and equitable, and further in what is honourable and becoming. These are the levels in a person on which conscience is founded by the Lord, and consequently intelligence and wisdom.

(Secrets of Heaven 2915)



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Whenever people do anything good for the sake of what is good, and anything just for the sake of what is just, they love the neighbour and exercise goodwill, for they then act from a love of what is good, and from a love of what is just.

(Secrets of Heaven 8123)

**Reflection:** *It's simply not possible to treat others with the type of kindness, fairness, and love that are spoken of in today's readings, and at the same time view them from a place of superiority. On the contrary, a humble attitude helps us realise that we are no better than others, and that we are all on similar walks of life. This leads us to the kind of healthy interactions described in the Scripture for today. Joseph was a just man. He could have reacted differently to Mary's pregnancy than he did, but there is no "How dare you do this to me" attitude in his actions.*

*What is one way that you can foster a humble attitude toward other people this Christmas season?*

*Who is one person in your life to-ward whom you could orient yourself in a more kind and fair way?*

*What is one way that you could treat that person more kindly and fairly?*

**Notes:**

# 15

## **“Then Joseph Did as the Angel Commanded” — A Spirit of Obedience** **December 15**

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus.  
(Matthew 1:24-25)

A spirit of obedience is the genuine form that faith and goodwill take. In fact people receive heaven and its joy in the measure of their affection for truth and goodness, and also in the measure of their obedience.  
(Secrets of Heaven 7161.1;  
Apocalypse Explained 695:8)

A life of faith lies in doing the Lord’s commandments from a spirit of obedience. A life of goodwill lies in doing them from love.  
(Secrets of Heaven 9193.3)

Divine order requires people to adjust themselves to receive God, and to prepare themselves as dwelling-places and temples into which He may enter, and in which He may live. These things they must do of them-selves while still acknowledging that they are from God. All people must and will advance in accordance with this order, if they are to become spiritual instead of earthly.  
(True Christian Religion 105)

He or she who has My commandments and lives them, it is he who loves Me. And he or she who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love them and manifest Myself to them.  
(John 14:21)

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**Reflection:** *Being a spiritual person means that we are willing to accept teachings that the Lord gives us—teachings that He hopes we will put into practice. At that point, living only for ourselves is, in a manner of speaking, no longer an option. Likewise, doing whatever we want can no longer be a primary driver in our lives. The daily decision to do what the Lord wants takes humility. That humility takes us out of the role of one who is entirely self-reliant, and it places us in a role of receiver.*

*When do you find it easy to do what the Lord wants, and when do you find it difficult?*

*What are one or two ways in which you could more fully accept the Lord's way of being into your life today?*

**Notes:**

# 16

## **“And Laid Him in a Manger” — The Saviour and His Process of Salvation**

### **December 16**

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

(Luke 2:1-7)

The words of Scripture, “conceiving and bearing,” mean being regenerated. For a person who is being regenerated is conceived and born anew. Regeneration is for this reason called rebirth, but it is a rebirth that is spiritual. People are indeed born human beings from their parents, but they do not become truly human until they are born again from the Lord.


(Secrets of Heaven 3860)

When a life of goodwill and faith is breathed into us by the Lord, we are made alive. We become spiritual and heavenly, and we are called “new creatures” from having been created anew.

(Secrets of Heaven 780)

Just as we receive new life from the Lord, so we receive the human form, and at length a very beautiful angelic form, which is the likeness of the Lord. It is in this way that a regenerated person becomes a new creature.

(Spiritual Experiences 4837)



**Reflection:** *One of the most beautiful and telling images of humility is that of the God of heaven and earth choosing to be born in a stable and laid in a manger. There is nothing “self-honouring” about the Lord in this picture, when yet He is more to be honoured than any king or dignitary. He alone can cause us to be conceived anew, spiritually reborn, and regenerated. One way to cooperate with Him in this process is to see the importance of what is spiritual over what is earthly or material.*

*What are one or two experiences you’ve had in which material things, or a desire for earthly experiences, power, or prestige have been more important to you than matters of the spirit, or more important to you than the Lord? What can you do today to reverse this human tendency, so that you can stay focused on the Lord, and on higher, spiritual goals?*

**Notes:**

# 17

## **“Glory to God in the Highest” The Part of Us That Cares about Spiritual Things**

### **December 17**

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward all!”  
(Luke 2:8-14)

In the Word of God “a shepherd” or one who pastures a flock means one who teaches and leads to a good life —a life that flows forth from a spirit of goodwill.  
(Secrets of Heaven 4713)

The words of Scripture, “Praise our God, all you His servants, and you that fear Him,” mean influx from the Lord into heaven, and thus complete consensus of the angels, that all who are in truths of faith and goods of love should worship the Lord as the only God of heaven. These things have reference to a new Christianity to be established by Him.  
(Apocalypse Revealed 809.1)

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**Reflection:** *The Lord sent angels to share the news of His birth with the shepherds. This continues the theme of simplicity in the Christmas story, and the overall feel of a humble birth. Even though the angels and shepherds lived in different worlds, they had several things in common: They rejoiced at the news of the Lord's birth; they had a spontaneous response to this historic event; they allowed the magnitude of what was happening to sink in; etc. Ultimately, it affected them with a sense of wonder.*

*What is one way that you can let the meaning of the Lord's birth sink into you this Christmas season?*

*What can you do today to open up to the Lord's work of salvation—in your heart, mind, and life?*

**Notes:**



# 18

## **“And They Came with Haste” A Willing Response to Opportunities Presented**

**December 18**

So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marvelled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. (Luke 2:15-20)

The shepherds who made known the birth of the Lord were able to receive and believe, and, from the good of faith, to make it known. (Spiritual Experiences 4734)

Life from the Lord flows only into a humble heart because it is fitted to receive. It is fitted to receive because when a heart is truly humble, no selfish or worldly love stands in the way.  
(Secrets of Heaven 8873)

When a person acknowledges in heart that there is nothing of goodness in him- or herself, and that he can do nothing of himself, and on the other hand, that all goodness is from the Lord, and that the Lord can do all things, this opens all things of his or her mind, and thus gives room for the Divine to flow in with goodness and power. This is why it is necessary for a person to be in humility before the Lord, according to which reception is effected. (Apocalypse Explained 1210.1)

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**Reflection:** *One of today's readings talks about "giving room" (or making space) for the Divine to flow in. A humble acknowledgment of the Lord is what creates this space. When we're open to the Lord's leadership, He can move within us and speak to us. He can show us opportunities—for doing something useful, or for noticing something good in another person, or for responding to a need that we see before us, etc.*

*How can you open yourself to such opportunities today?*

**Notes:**

# 19

## **“And the Holy Spirit Was Upon Him” Honouring the Lord’s Silent Work Within Us December 19**

Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.”  
(Luke 2:22,25-32)

Many people suppose that the Lord desires and loves glory in the way that a person in the world does. But the Lord does not desire glory for His own sake, only for the sake of those who ascribe it to Him. When people ascribe glory to the Lord they do so because they venerate Him as the One who is supreme, and they humbly regard themselves as nothing in comparison. And since reverence and humility are both pre-sent when they ascribe glory to the Lord, they are in a fit state to receive an inflow of goodness from the Lord, and so also of love towards Him. This is why the Lord desires that people ascribe glory to Him.  
(Secrets of Heaven 8263)

The words of Scripture ,“salvation to Him,” mean that salvation is from the Lord, since He is salvation. For all the good of love and all the truth of faith with human beings are the Lord’s with them, and not their own; and from the good of love and the truth of faith come salvation and eternal life. In addition, this is why the Lord was called “Jesus,” because Jesus means salvation.  
(Apocalypse Explained 460.1-2)

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**Reflection:** *It's interesting: There are times when we may ascribe certain things to the Lord that we ourselves long for. For example, sometimes we may wish to be noticed, honoured, and thought well of; and so we can easily assume that these things are what the Lord wants for Himself. But today's readings indicate that the reason the Lord wants us to praise Him is not for His sake but for our own—so that we can develop a sense of “reverence and humility.” These are states of life that He can work with. Simeon is a person in the Christmas story who displays these qualities.*

*Who are one or two people in your life who have this kind of unassuming goodness—who seem to honour the Lord with reverence and humility, and who seem to be open to His leadership in their lives?  
What is one way that you can do each of these things today?*

**Notes:**

# 20

## **“She Gave Thanks to the Lord” A Willingness to Accept Help**

**December 20**

Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

(Luke 2:36-38)

True confession of the Lord from the heart is genuine confession. The person with whom it exists acknowledges that everything good comes from Him. When that acknowledgement exists with people, it is a state of humility. For in this case they acknowledge the Lord to be everything in them, and they themselves in comparison to be nothing.

(Secrets of Heaven 3880.7)

Offerings of thanksgiving, adoration, and prayer that are heard and accepted by the Lord actually begin in the Lord. The Church knows this to be so. Therefore, whenever the Church is engaged in anything holy, it prays that God may be present, giving guidance to thought and speech. What happens in all of this is that when a person is engaged in true worship, the Lord flows into the forms of goodness, also the truths that are present with him or her. He also raises these things upwards towards Himself, and raises the person along with them. He does these things in the measure and degree that goodness and truth govern the individual.

(Secrets of Heaven 10299.2)

I will hope continually,  
And will praise You yet more and more.  
My mouth shall tell of Your righteousness  
And Your salvation all the day,  
For I do not know their limits.  
I will go in the strength of the Lord God;  
I will make mention of Your righteousness, of Yours only.  
(Psalm 71:14-16)

**Reflection:** *Anna is another one of the people in the Christmas story whose reaction to the Lord's birth was exemplary. She immediately gave thanks. It's as though she knew and believed that life would get better now that the Messiah had come into the world. Help had arrived. Accepting help—help from others and help from the Lord—is something that can be hard to do.*

*How do you typically respond when help is available to you from others? from the Lord?*

*Why do you respond in the way(s) that you do?*

*How can you be more accepting of help from others this Christmas season?*

*How can you be more accepting of help from the Lord?*

**Notes:**

# 21

## **“In the Days of Herod the King” The Destructiveness of Arrogance**

**December 21**

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.” (Matthew 2:1-2)

The delight of heaven is not the delight that goes with being great and having position over others, but the delight that goes with being humble and with a desire to serve others. And so it does not consist in wishing to be the greatest but to be the least, as the Lord teaches in Luke 9:48.

(Secrets of Heaven 3417.2)

In the Lord’s kingdom, that is, in heaven, those who are greatest are pre-eminently servants. The reason is that their obedience is the greatest of all, and their humility is greater than that of any others. These are the ones who are meant by the least who will be greatest, and the last who will be first.

(Secrets of Heaven 5164.2)

There is a love of ruling arising from love of the neighbour, and a love of ruling arising from selfish love. Those who are in the love of ruling from love of the neighbour seek power and position to the end that they may perform uses to the public and to individuals; and to such, there-fore, these things are entrusted in the heavens. Emperors, kings, and noblemen who have been born and brought up to positions of authority, if they humble themselves before God can be in that love.

(True Christian Religion 405)



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**Reflection:** *Ambition can be a positive or a negative thing, depending on what's behind it. It can lead people to great levels of service to others, and it can lead to an unhealthy quest for power and prestige. The Lord wants us to seek the former and shun the latter (when the latter is prompted by a desire to control others to selfish ends).*

*What are one or two new avenues of service that the Lord has called you to over the past year?*

*What is one new avenue of service that He is (or may be) calling you to in the new year?*

*How will you respond to that call?*

**Notes:**

# 22

## **“Bring Back Word to Me” What Stands in the Way**

### **December 22**

When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had secretly called the wise men, he determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, “Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also.” (Matthew 2:3,7-8)

The Lord flows in with power to those who are humble, but not into those who are arrogant, because arrogance reject His influx. (Secrets of Heaven 9039:3)

That which stands in the way of goodwill and faith being received, above all else, is selfish love. Indeed within self-centred love there lies contempt for all others in comparison with oneself; there lies hatred and revenge if one is not venerated most highly; and there lies mercilessness and cruelty, thus the worst evils of all, into which good-ness and truth cannot possibly be introduced, since they are completely opposite. (Secrets of Heaven 2327.3)

One who is haughty (i.e., arrogantly superior and disdainful) is ruled by selfish love. He or she not only sets him- or herself up above others but also does not care a thing about what is divine. (Secrets of Heaven 4348.2)

The Divine cannot flow into a proud heart, that is, into a heart full of self-centred love, for such a heart is hard and in the Word is called “a heart of stone.” (Secrets of Heaven 9377.1)

Those who love only themselves cannot at heart possibly humble themselves. (Secrets of Heaven 5929.2)

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**Reflection:** *An attitude of “I don’t need the Lord” is not one that the Lord can easily work with. Worse yet is where such an attitude can lead—toward contempt for others, hate, cruelty, and the like. Herod, because of his self-serving choices and actions, is a prime example in the Word of the dangers of this attitude in our lives.*

*What is your experience of arrogance, contempt for others, and/or an attitude of superiority, when these things try to sneak into your life?*

*How do they show up in you—what form does each one take?*

*What are one or two ways in which you can avoid these common human reflexes today?*

**Notes:**

# 23

## **“When They Saw the Star”**

### **Responding Positively to the Truth**

**December 23**

When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy.

(Matthew 2:9-10)

The Divine is not moved by any desire for glory. He de-sires humility and submission not for His own sake but for our own. For when humility is present in us we turn away from evil and falsity that are present in us, and in so doing we remove them. Once these things have been removed, the Divine is able to flow in with goodness and truth. This is the real reason why we should express humility in the presence of the Divine. (Secrets of Heaven 4348.2)

So far as we detest elation of mind (i.e., selfish pride) so far humility before God enters.

(Secrets of Heaven 803.2)

One of the uses that temptations (i.e., spiritual conflicts) serve is to make us humble; that is, they prepare us to receive the life of heaven from the Lord. It is a new life such as one possesses who has been regenerated.

(Secrets of Heaven 8966)

In the Word of God “a star” symbolises knowledge of internal goodness and truth, which comes from the Lord. In the highest sense it symbolises knowledge regarding the Lord.

(Secrets of Heaven 9293.3,  
Apocalypse Explained 422.20)

**Reflection:** *The wise men provide a perfect contrast to Herod. Instead of self-preservation, they were all about reaching outside of themselves, regardless of how important they may have been in their country of origin, and seeking to humble themselves to the One born King of the Jews. The star in the story is a symbol for truth—in this case, truth about the Lord. Every truth about the Lord points to one or another of His qualities, also to our need to humble ourselves before Him, so that He can give us that very quality. The wise men rejoiced when they saw the star. In the same way, we can find delight in teachings about the Lord which describe His qualities.*

*What are one or two of the Lord's qualities that are favourites of yours?*

*What kind of God do they describe?*

*In what way(s) do they support you in your spiritual walk?*

**Notes:**

# 24

## **“Fell Down and Worshiped Him”**

### **Humility of Heart**

#### **December 24**

And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him.

(Matthew 2:11)

When real humility is present in a person, he or she surrenders all power to think or do anything by him— or herself, and abandons himself completely to the Divine; and in this condition he draws near to the Divine.

(Secrets of Heaven 6866)

There is a correspondence which exists between the thoughts and desires of the mind and the actions and gestures of the body. This is recognised to be so with all voluntary actions and gestures as well as involuntary ones. Humility of heart, for example, brings us to our knees—an external gesture of the body. Still greater and more interior humility extends us prostrate—flat on the ground.

(Secrets of Heaven 4215.2, 5323)

Humility before a person produces a bowing down, according to the estimation of him or her; but in presence of the Divine it produces total prostration, especially when people think that the Divine in respect to power and wisdom is everything, and they in comparison are nothing. When human beings are in this acknowledgment from the heart, they come as it were out of them-selves and fall on their faces; and when they are thus out of themselves they are also removed from the self. When this is removed the Divine fills them and raises them up.

(Apocalypse Explained 77)

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**Reflection:** *One of the readings for today invites us to get out of ourselves. While it is useful to reflect on what's going on inside us, and to remain conscious of our own needs, an occasional reminder not to be too self-absorbed can be helpful. When we are able to get out of ourselves, we can see other people around us and become more attuned to their needs. One way of getting outside of ourselves is by giving the gift of personal support to others.*

*With just one day to go until Christmas, what are one or two needs that you are aware of in others around you?*

*How can you respond to those needs in the gift-giving spirit of Christmas?*

**Notes:**



# 25

## **“Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh” The Desire to Give**

**December 25**

And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:11)

In the Word of God “a gift” means introduction, because it is intended to initiate goodwill and favour. In ancient times, gifts were presented to kings or priests when people went to them; and as this was a customary and holy practice, meaning introduction, the wise men from the east who came to Jesus soon after His birth brought gifts. (Secrets of Heaven 4262.2)

In ancient times, gifts were presented to kings when people went to them. So too, the wise men from the east brought gifts to the Lord just born. These external gifts symbolised internal or spiritual gifts, namely, such as go forth from the heart, which belong to love and faith. Togetherness is effected by such gifts. (Secrets of Heaven 4262.3; Apocalypse Explained 661)

In the Word of God, by “gifts” are meant the kinds of things that are offered to the Lord from the heart, and which are accepted by Him. The situation with such gifts is as it is with all of our deeds. The deeds that we do are merely acts performed by the body. But deeds regarded together with the will are outward expressions of the will displayed before the eyes. In other words, deeds are nothing other than witness-bearers to such things as compose our will. So it is that by “gifts” offered to the Lord, such things as are present in our will or heart are meant. (Secrets of Heaven 9293.1)

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**Reflection:** *Our love, our faith, our good and useful deeds: These are gifts that are most pleasing to the Lord. The reason is that they are “witness-bearers” to His presence in our lives, and to our responsiveness to Him. Christmas is a time of gift-giving. As you give and receive gifts on this Christmas day, consider the gifts that you can give to the Lord. The readings in this booklet have been gathered around the theme of humility.*

*What are one or two ways in which you can give the gift of humility to the Lord in the coming year, so that He can lead you to greater levels of love, faith, and useful service?*

**Notes:**

**Merry Christmas, everyone,  
from your friends in the New Church.**

**(Continued)**

# 26

## **“And the Word Was God”**

### **Openness to the Lord in His Word**

**December 26**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of all people. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1,3,4,14)

The Word is like a treasure chest in which lie precious stones, pearls, and jewelled headbands. If a person regards the Word as holy, and reads it as a useful guide to life, then he or she is like one who holds such a chest in his or her hands. (True Christian Religion 238)

Without the Word of God no one has spiritual intelligence, which consists in knowledge of God, of heaven and hell, and a life after death; nor has he or she any knowledge at all of the Lord, of faith in and love of Him, and consequently of redemption. Such knowledge is the means of salvation. In fact, without the Word there would be no union with the Lord. (Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture 114, De Verbo 14)

Innocence consists in being led by the Lord and not by self. Angels who are in innocence of the inmost degree love to be led by the Lord as little children by their father; and for the same reason the divine truth that they hear directly from the Lord or indirectly through the Word and preaching they take immediately into their will and do it, thus committing it to life. (continued)

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These angels being such are nearest to the Lord, and are so separated from what is their own that they live as it were in the Lord. They know that they have nothing of wisdom from themselves, and that acknowledging this is being wise. They know also that what they know is as nothing compared to what they don't know; and they say that knowing, acknowledging, and perceiving this is the first step toward wisdom. (Heaven and Hell 280)

**Reflection:**

*This year's Christmas readings have been gathered around the theme of humility. And now, as a new year is about to dawn, you are invited to reflect on how the Lord leads you, and the part that humility plays in it.*

*If you were to narrow it down to one or two ways in which the Lord most effectively leads you forward in your life, what would those one or two ways be?*

*What do you think is the next step that the Lord wants you to take, or the next change for the better that He wants you to make in the new year, so that good things can happen?*

*And finally, what will you need to do in the coming year, so that these things can become realities? In short, what can you do humbly to accept the Lord's leadership into your life, a little more this year than before?*

*Good wishes in this next part of your spiritual journey.*

**Notes:**

We hope that you enjoy this year's Christmas Readings and that they add a new depth to the coming season for you.

We also hope that you are able to join us for some of the activities our two societies have planned.

### **Our Website**

[www.newchurch.org.uk](http://www.newchurch.org.uk)

### **Colchester New Church**

Rev. Erik Buss, Pastor

[erikjbuss@gmail.com](mailto:erikjbuss@gmail.com)

07897 343933

### **Michael Church**

131 Burton Road

Stockwell, London

SW9 6TG

We must acknowledge the good work of our friend and colleague, Rev. Mark Pendleton, Pastor of the Glenview New Church.

For many years Mark has been preparing Christmas readings, making them available across the New Church.

This pamphlet is his work with only minor 'tweaking' to permit it to fit our formats in the UK.