

'SEEING THE FACE OF JESUS IN CHILDREN THESE 12 DAYS' – HOMILY – 31 DECEMBER 2017

Let us begin with time before the Christmas Crib.

Over these [TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS](#)

- Christmas until the Epiphany, the coming of the Magi -

The Crib is a point of reflection and wonder.

During these sacred [TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS](#), we commemorate:

- Dec 25th **Christmas Day**
- Dec 28th The Feast of the **Holy Innocents** (Infants killed by Herod while seeking to kill Jesus)
- Dec 31st The Feast of the Holy Family (normally the Sunday between Christmas & Epiphany)
- January 1st **Mary**, the Holy Mother of God
- January 7th The **Epiphany** (normally Jan 6th, but on the Sunday in 2018)

With the stress and rush of modern life,

we might be tempted to forget to keep the [TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS](#).

We might wonder why every day is not like Christmas.

Yet we have [TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS](#) to move into a pattern of peace, facing what is before us in the new year.

REMEMBERING THE TRAGEDY OF THE HOLY INNOCENTS IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL, HOW DO WE PROTECT OUR CHILDREN?

AS WE GAZE ON THE SIGN OF JESUS IN THE CRIB, DO WE GAZE WITH THE PEACEFUL WONDER OF THE HUMBLE SHEPHERDS OR DO WE SEEK OUT VIOLENCE AND PRESERVATION OF POWER AND POSITION LIKE HEROD?

[THE FACE OF JESUS IN THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD](#)

Australian news on Christmas Day highlighted media comments on a part of [Pope Francis Christmas Message to the World](#) – the part about Israel and Palestine.

Pope Francis began his reference to those two nations with the words:

"We see Jesus in the children of the Middle East who continue to suffer because of growing tensions between Israelis and Palestinians."

Pope Francis in his Christmas Message to the world specifically invited us to pray for the children of the world.

He called us to see [THE FACE OF JESUS IN THE CHILDREN SUFFERING](#) in

- **the Middle East** including Palestine and Israel, Syria, Iraq and Yemen;
- **Africa** including in South Sudan, Somalia, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo; the Central African Republic and Nigeria;
- **worldwide** "wherever peace and security are threatened by the danger of tensions and new conflicts";

- **The Korean peninsula; Venezuela; Ukraine; Myanmar and Bangladesh;**
- **worldwide** - the children of unemployed parents;
Children whose childhood has been robbed and forced to work;
Children enrolled as child soldiers by unscrupulous mercenaries;
Children forced to leave their countries,
Children alone and an easy target of human traffickers,
Children forced to emigrate and their journey's risk, at times ending in tragedy
Children not welcomed and with no place to lay their head.

Pope Francis added this **plea to us**:

"May our hearts not be closed as they were in the homes of Bethlehem."

In Australia we add the need to advocate for the innocent children abused in Churches, families, institutions and society.
Not to close our hearts to people and issues, but to change to be the way Jesus wants.
We also are called in Australia to see the children suffering from racism and sexism.

SHEPHERDS, HUMBLE & WATCHFUL, WITH SIMPLE EYES

Introducing his reflection with the Holy Family,

Pope Francis reached out to us, inviting us to reflect on the shepherds and saying:

"The first people to see the humble glory of the Saviour, after Mary and Joseph, were the shepherds of Bethlehem. They recognized the sign proclaimed to them by the angels and adored the Child. Those humble and watchful men are an example for believers of every age who, before the mystery of Jesus, are not scandalized by his poverty. Rather, like Mary, they trust in God's word and contemplate his glory with simple eyes..."

Pope Francis invited us this Christmas to focus on the sign of the Child Jesus:

"to recognize him in the faces of little children, especially those for whom, like Jesus, "there is no place in the inn" (Lk 2:7). and "may we commit ourselves, with the help of his grace, to making our world more human and more worthy for the children of today and of the future."

TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS – OUR PARISH TRADITION TO SING

For several years now our community sings 'THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS'.

Usually in the two halves of the church, alternating lines.

This year as we sing and enjoy the pace,

let us be determined to see **THE FACE OF JESUS IN THE CHILDREN OF OUR WORLD.**

LUKE'S GOSPEL 2:22-40

Today's Gospel Luke 2:22-40 describes two holy adults, Simeon and Anna who in turn, saw the baby Jesus when he was presented and consecrated in the Jerusalem Temple.

The scene has moved from the birth of Jesus in **Bethlehem**,

to **Jerusalem** for the consecration, and later on to **Nazareth** for his life as a child.

Like Simeon and Anna, may we recognise Jesus in the lives of children.
Both Simeon and Anna could see with eyes of faith as they behold Jesus present.
Let us behold Jesus now. Amen

Fr Gerry

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – Seeing the Face of Jesus in the Children - 31 December 2017]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/1203117.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook31122017>]

Other: [Pope Francis Christmas Message to the World](#)

