

'THE HUMAN FAMILY & THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS'

30th December 2018

GAZING AT THE CHRISTMAS CRIB & THE HUMAN FAMILY

We begin by gazing at the Christmas Crib.

Jesus was born into our world with its many cultures, and races and languages and customs. Jesus was born into our human family with its many relationships and into the ways we live as family.

We are sisters and brothers in the human family. The Christmas Crib also represents the human family. The setting is humble, reminding us of the need of shelter for every member of the human family.

The animals can symbolize the many dimensions of God's Creation. The Crib is inclusive, as Jesus came for each of us.

TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS

Over these twelve days of Christmas – Christmas until the Epiphany, the coming of the Magi – The Crib is a point of reflection and pondering 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 30th The Feast of the **Holy Family** (normally the Sunday between Christmas & Epiphany)
- January 1st **Mary**, the Holy Mother of God
- January 6th **The Epiphany**

As we reflect on those times when we feel one as a family, Christmas is essential.

AND IN THIS CONCLUDING YEAR OF 2018, AT WHAT OTHER TIMES DID WE FEEL AS ONE?

Some responses have been:

- Watching, waiting and praying for the rescue of the soccer team of 12 young players and coach from the cave system in Thailand in July.
- The Winter Olympics in February and the Winter Paralympics in March.
- The Commonwealth Games on the Gold Coast in April.
- The royal wedding of Harry and Meghan in May.
- Following the news reports and praying for the Indonesian victims and survivors of the Tsunami in Sulawesi in September and the Sunda Strait Tsunami in December
- Following the media and praying for other Queenslanders in the Floods in north Queensland in early February and the Queensland Bushfires in November.

POPE FRANCIS CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2018

Pope Francis has asked the human family in his **2018 Christmas Message** to the world to remember conflicts in the world including Israelis and Palestinians, Syria, Yemen, the Korean peninsula, Venezuela, Ukraine and Nicaragua, and the continent of Africa

'where millions of persons are refugees or displaced and in need of humanitarian assistance and food security'...

He speaks of groups of peoples

'all those peoples that experience ideological, cultural and economic forms of colonization and see their freedom and identity compromised, as well as those suffering from hunger and the lack of educational and health care services. A particular thought goes to our brothers and sisters who celebrate the Birth of the Lord in difficult, if not hostile situations, especially where the Christian community is a minority, often vulnerable or not taken into account. May the Lord grant that they, and all minorities, may live in peace and see their rights recognized, especially the right to religious freedom. May the little Child whom we contemplate today in the manger, in the cold of the night, watch over all the children of the world, and every frail, vulnerable and discarded person.'

As we gaze and ponder upon the Christmas Crib during these twelve days of Christmas may we remember to watch and wait, to plan and act **humbly** for a better world.

In Luke's Gospel there is a brief summary of the first 12 years of Jesus life in Nazareth.

'When they had finished everything required by the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.'

GOSPEL OF LUKE 2:41-52

What happens when we love others so much and care for them, and yet don't fully understand their wisdom and God's blessing on them. Let us turn to Jesus, 12 years old in the Temple and his parents searching for him.

We can identify with the love and heartache and worry of the parents of Jesus, as they search for him.

Now twelve years old, Jesus moves into next part of his life, from 12 to 30 years of age.

Today's Gospel relates:

*'Now every year his parents
went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover.
And when he was twelve years old,
they went up as usual for the festival.
When the festival was ended and they started to return,
the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem,
but his parents did not know it
Assuming that he was in the group of travellers,
they went a day's journey.
Then they started to look for him
among their relatives and friends.
When they did not find him,
they returned to Jerusalem to search for him.*

*After three days they found him in the temple,
sitting among the teachers,
listening to them and asking them questions.
And all who heard him were amazed
at his understanding and his answers.*

*When his parents saw him they were astonished;
and his mother said to him,
'Child, why have you treated us like this?
Look, your father and I
have been searching for you in great anxiety.'*

*He said to them, **'Why were you searching for me?
Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?'***

*But they did not understand what he said to them.
Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth,
and was obedient to them.
His mother treasured all these things in her heart.
And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years,
and in divine and human favour.'*

We can translate the translation of 'treasured' also as 'pondered'.
This Christmas, we place before God, what we ponder and treasure in our hearts.

Acknowledging God's blessings and favour this Christmas,
let us sing together the Christmas song *'The Twelve Days of Christmas'*.
We include in our prayer and by imagining them in our Christmas Crib,

- the groupings of people Pope Francis has mentioned,
- people in our own lives,
- the events we have pondered and treasured in our hearts,
- and those for whom we have prayed as a human family this year.

We sing by the format our lead singers will now introduce.
This year as we sing and **enjoy** the pace,
let us see the face of Jesus among us,
and thank God **joyfully** for the blessings and favour we have received.

Let us sing.

Fr. Gerry

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/123018.cfm>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook30122018>]

Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Dili, Timor-Leste – 30 December 2018 www.stjosephsbrackenridge.com

