



Fear not

for behold, I bring you
good news of great joy that
will be for all the people.

LUKE 2:10



Reflection:

January 2024

“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”

(Luke 2:10)

As we bask in the warmth of Christmas and New Year celebrations, it is essential to ponder the profound message contained in the biblical verse, “I bring you good news of great joy” (Luke 2:10). The Christmas narrative unfolds a synodal journey that changed the course of human history. As we begin this year, let us surrender to the grace of this synodal journey so that our lives are illumined with the “good news of great joy.”

The essence of the Christmas mystery is the awe-inspiring truth of the Incarnation – God taking on human form to dwell among His people. “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him” (1 John 4:9). The profound reality of God’s presence among us is a source of immense joy and hope just as it was to Joseph and Mary. The presence of God in their midst gave them a joy so supreme that it triumphed over their worldly limitations. If we too can focus on the God who is with us rather than the challenges that assail us, our hearts can exult in the Good News - God dwells with us! And, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31).

In the annunciation narrative, Mary becomes a beacon of profound faith and openness. In prayer and silence, she listens to the angel Gabriel, embracing an atmosphere of total freedom and dialogue with the divine. Her response, “Here I am the handmaid of the Lord” (Luke 1:38), signifies a complete surrender to God’s will. Mary’s fiat becomes a model for us to approach our own synodal journey with openness, humility, and a willingness to embrace the unexpected.

Joseph, portrayed in the Gospels as a just and righteous man, grapples with doubts and questions upon discovering Mary’s pregnancy. In the midst of uncertainty, he listens to God and obeys the angel’s guidance: “He did as the angel of the Lord told him to do” (Matthew 1:24). Joseph’s example encourages us to seek answers in prayer and discernment, trusting in God’s plan even when faced with challenges. His joyful obedience becomes a guiding light for our synodal journey, reminding us of the importance of listening to God amidst doubts and uncertainties.

Mary and Joseph embark on a synodal journey to Bethlehem, facing difficulties and struggles along the way. The challenges culminate in the stark reality that “there was no place for them in any inn.” Yet, within the humble surroundings of a stable, amidst the silence and grace of the manger, the divine joy unfolds. Our journey through this year may be fraught with challenges, but looking at the ‘closed door’ in simple faith will lead us to our ‘manger’ where the Lord will refresh us with His joy.

The poor shepherds, attentive to the angels’ proclamation, exemplify openness, joy, and a readiness to explore. Their simplicity is a reminder that the good news of great joy is accessible to everyone. Similarly, the three wise kings, guided by a star, embark on a shared journey of discovery. Their willingness to seek and explore leads them to the Christ child, and they return “a different way.” The stories of the shepherds and wise kings inspire us to approach our synodal journey with open hearts, joyous anticipation, and a readiness to be transformed by the encounter with the divine.

As we transition from Christmas to Epiphany, and still further, let us carry the lessons of the synodal journey embedded in the Christmas narrative into our daily lives. Let us approach life with faith, openness, and a willingness to explore the depths of divine love. In doing so, we can continue to experience the “good news of great joy,” finding serenity and divine peace in the midst of life’s complexities.

Bishop Alex Vadakkumthala

.....

Bishop of Kannur & Ecclesiastical Advisor,
Jesus Youth India

