

Pope Francis: Apostolic Letter on the Meaning of the Christmas Crib



“The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture”, continues Pope Francis. Contemplating the Christmas story is like setting out on a spiritual journey, “drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman.” So great is His

love for us, writes the Pope, “that He became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with Him.”

The shepherds

Turning to the shepherds, Pope Francis writes that, “unlike so many other people, busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation.” The shepherds respond to God “who comes to meet us in the Infant Jesus by setting out to meet Him with love, gratitude and awe”, he adds.

The poor and the lowly

The presence of the poor and the lowly, continues the Pope, is a reminder that “God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of His love and who ask Him to draw near to them.” From the manger, “Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized.”

Mary and Joseph

The Pope then focuses on the figures of Mary and Joseph.

“Mary is a mother who contemplates her child and shows Him to every visitor”, he writes. “In her, we see the Mother of God who does not keep her Son only to herself, but invites everyone to obey His word and to put it into practice. Saint Joseph stands by her side, “protecting the Child and His Mother.” Joseph is the guardian, the just man, who “entrusted himself always to God’s will.”

The Infant Jesus

But it is when we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, that the nativity scene comes alive, says Pope Francis. “It seems impossible, yet it is true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way He wished to reveal the greatness of His love: by smiling and opening His arms to all.” The crèche allows us to see and touch this unique and unparalleled event that changed the course of history, “but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God’s own life.”