

Christmas 2020

St. Patrick

She was a bold saint in the 14th century who had a deep closeness with her God. Kings and popes sought her counsel, and she was unafraid to tell the truth which they didn't want to hear. Her name is St. Catherine of Siena, and she gave this meditation on that first Christmas night: **“You see (Jesus) lying among the animals, in such poverty that Mary had nothing to cover him up with. It was winter, and she kept him warm with the animals' breath and a blanket of hay. He is the fire of charity but he chose to endure the cold in his humanity”** (1).

And so, Friends, we gather in the cold as well, beginning our celebration of a Christmas unlike any other Christmas which we've celebrated before.

Think for a moment. It wasn't a Christmas which Mary and Joseph dreamt of for the birth of the Savior, God's Word made flesh. It hadn't turned out like they had hoped. They were alone, on a journey and, for the birth of Mary's son, they were homeless. I wonder if, during the months of the pregnancy, they had dreamt that family members would come by, after the birth of Jesus, and visit their newborn. No one was there to lend a helping hand, to congratulate them, to celebrate with them.

The only visitors that first night were...shepherds. They were a mangy bunch of stinking guys—*How long do you think it had been since they had a bath?* They didn't live up to the rituals of the faith. They were unclean (2).

And yet, these filthy shepherds made God's invitation list, and they were the first to gawk over the wonder of the new birth.

After their visit, during the frigid quiet of that night, what prayer do you imagine Mary voiced to her God? And Joseph, not able to put the pieces of the puzzle together because some of the pieces were missing: What did Joseph whisper to God as he stood watch in that Bethlehem stable?

St. Patrick's: It's a Christmas that didn't turn out like we hoped. In the coldness now, and through the coming day: What do you want to tell Jesus? You know, God became very vulnerable that first Christmas. You can speak to Jesus truthfully from within, and share his feast with him.

“Let this be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”

Go ahead, talk to this Jesus from your heart. He's invited you to his special day, *his* birth-day.

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- (1) St. Catherine of Siena, from *The Dialogue*; quoted in *Give Us This Day—December 2020* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2020), pg. 261
 - (2) See Robert J. Karris, O.F.M., “The Gospel according to Luke,” in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990), pg. 683.

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General Intercessions

**For the church of God,
as we celebrate with joy the birth of Christ in his first coming;
we pray to you, O Lord—**

**For our families and homes,
that Christ, who was laid in a manger,
may dwell with us always;
we pray to you, O Lord—**

**For our world,
ravaged by divisions and by Covid-19,
that the Prince of Peace may bring us healing and hope;
we pray to you, O Lord—**

**For the lonely old and the lonely young this Christmas;
for the hungry rich and the hungry poor;
for the weakness in all of us;
we pray to you, O Lord—**

**For the eternal rest in God's embrace of all who have died in hope,
especially Anthony Biggers; also, our loved ones, as well as St.
Patrick parishioners who have died over the years; and all who have
died from the coronavirus;
we pray to you, O Lord—**

