



Teachings from Reverend Robert John

# Nurturing Our Emergent Christedness

*Thus says the Lord:*

*“A voice is heard in Ramah,  
lamentation and bitter weeping.  
Rachel is weeping for her children;  
because they are not.”*

*Thus says the Lord:*

*“Keep your voice from weeping,  
and your eyes from tears;  
for your work shall be rewarded says the Lord,  
and they shall come back from the land of  
the enemy.”*

*Jeremiah 31:15-17*

*Now when they [the wise men, the magi] had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Rise, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt, and remain there till I tell you; for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” And he rose and took the child and his mother by night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, “Out of Egypt have I called my son.”*

*Then Herod, when he saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, was in a furious rage, and he sent and killed all the male children in Bethlehem and in all that region who were two years old or under, according to the time which he had ascertained from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah:*

*“A voice was heard in Ramah,  
wailing and loud lamentation,  
Rachel weeping for her children;  
she refused to be consoled,  
because they were no more.”*

*But when Herod died, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, “Rise, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child’s life are dead.” And he rose and took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.*

*Matthew 2:13-21*

EACH ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS the spiritual worlds draw near to the earth and the veil that separates us from the mystery of the heavens is at its thinnest. We are presented with the opportunity to prepare and open ourselves to the spiritual worlds which seek to penetrate the contours of our being and stimulate the emergence of new life within our consciousness and being.

Each Christmas festival we are presented with the opportunity to respond to working of the spiritual worlds upon and within us; to recognise the emergent new life, the emergent aspect of Christedness that seeks to come to life within us.

Each year at Christmas some new dimension of Christed consciousness, some new aspect or quality of Christed beingness works to come to birth within us as we open ourselves and respond to the closeness of the spiritual worlds and heavenly beings.

This emergent Christedness is like a newborn baby ... pure, innocent, vulnerable and in need of protection and nurture. And it is this response, this spiritual work that the Advent reflection for today – the Fourth Sunday in Advent – summons us to. Will we work to create and sustain a protective and nurturing environment within our being in which our emerging Christedness can grow to maturity?

This is indeed the work, or focus, of the twelve days and holy nights of the spiritual festival of Christmas.

But we are so impatient to realise the Christ within our souls. We want the Christ to be born and we want to be enlightened

overnight, in an instant – but time and effort are required. Imagine for a moment the newborn baby in Bethlehem and ask yourself: Is any baby aware of its sonship? Is it aware that it is born into a particular family? Is it aware of who its mother and father really are? And was that infant born at Christmas-time aware of Mary and Joseph, of Herod the king, of Bethlehem being its birthplace and who the three kings were? And the answer is clearly: No, he wasn't. So how can we be so impatient to become conscious of the Christ when the Christ himself was not conscious?

He was born, so Matthew's Gospel tells us, in Bethlehem in Judea. If we look at this from the point of view of our own soul, where he was born is as irrelevant to us today as is where we were born. More important is the fact that the Christ can only be born in a soul that acknowledges spiritual realities, a soul that is aware of the existence of worlds other than this present physical one, a soul that is open and responsive to the heavens. Christ can only enter into the soul that judges, not according to sense perceptions, but rather by the cause and the expression of spirit in this world. This is the first principle, the meaning of Bethlehem in Judea – that we must have this acknowledgement, openness and responsiveness to spiritual reality before Christ is born in our soul.

A king represents the will, and the three kings in this story are some of the wills (or expressions of will) that live within our being. It is wrong to think that we only have one will, for in fact we have many. And these three great wills worshipped the Christ.

And when the birth has occurred within us, then the work, or focus, of the twelve days and holy nights of the spiritual festival of Christmas is protecting, nurturing, maturing that newly-born aspect of Christedness which is the gift of the heavens to us.

Matthew's Gospel, chapter two, draws our attention to three responses or reactions that impact on our capability to protect and nurture to maturity the Christ-child within us:

- the adoration and worship by the wise men, or magi;

- the rageful slaughter of the infants by Herod; and
- the protective care of Joseph and Mary fleeing to Egypt.

### Wise Men – The Positive Response of Our Will

We know that metaphysically Herod is a representation of the action of our will. We're perhaps not so mindful that the wise men, or magi, also represent the action of our will. Matthew is presenting to us two ways in which we can respond or react to the newness of Christed life that emerges in us at Christ. We can **respond** like the wise men, or we can **react** like Herod.

Matthew tells us that the three wise men or kings fell down and **worshipped** the Christ-child, and then they offered him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh (Mt 2:11). What do these three kings represent? A king is a mighty person and often, as history tells us, a dominating tyrant by whose decree you either lived or died, were tortured or elevated. A king represents the will, and the three kings in this story are some of the wills (or expressions of will) that live within our being. It is wrong to think that we only have one will, for in fact we have many. And these three great wills **worshipped** the Christ.

Tradition tells us that the first king was the king of Tarsus. Tarsus controls the intellect and spiritual thoughts and is that particular part of our being which tells us how spiritual we are, how intellectually elevated we are, and how near to the Godhead. We can think of it spiritual egotism, and it must be subjected to the Christ. Our intellect with all its beauty, our spirituality, our spiritual gifts and our inspiration must all be subjected to the Christ. When we worship Christ on that level, then our pride will disappear.

The second king was the king of Arabia. He represents our undisciplined thoughts. It is with these thoughts that we try to defend ourselves. Arguments and opinions come from undisciplined thoughts and they build a

powerful wall around us that no one can penetrate. This wilfulness must also be given over to the Christ. We have to worship him despite our undisciplined thoughts.

The third king was the king of Sheba in Ethiopia. He is the king that wants stability. He wants a return to the original state of living in paradise. He wants to have peace and equilibrium. This ideal also needs to be subjected to the Christ. Ask any person who is intellectual, spiritually-minded, and who has this ideal of stability and equilibrium, what they want most in their life and the answer will always be: I want peace. How can I get peace?

The reason we equate Christmas with peace is because the angels sang, *Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace*. But these angels were singing about an age that lies two thousand years in the future. That is why Christ could say, *I didn't come to bring peace, I came to bring the sword*. That is the promise of Christmas. Christ doesn't bring peace; he is peace. He didn't come to bring us something. He came that we might have **him**. In our reluctance we want the gifts, but not the giver. Christ didn't come to bring us all these "things". If Matthew's Gospel is read carefully we find that the three kings **worshipped** him before they gave their gifts, and neither they nor Christ sought for gifts.

We all have idealistic thoughts when we discover something new, be it a relationship, a job, a baby or whatever. In time, though, we come to realise how difficult the road really is. We lay a firm foundation for the future when we present the wilful elements within us to Christ, and when we worship him saying, *You be the king, the wise person, in my soul. Through you I will gain a peace that will enable me stand fast in difficult times*.

Part of the work, then, of protecting and nurturing the new-born Christedness within our being is for us to be worshipful, filled with adoration, and to subject our will to Christ so that the working of our will may become spiritually enriching.

The journey and visitation of the wise men represents, then, the purposeful action of the spirit and the positive expression of our soul faculty of willing.

### **Herod – Our Negative Wilful Reaction**

But we must also be on guard against unbridled **wilfulness** within our being – the negative, reactive expression of the will that is represented by the other king in the gospel story: Herod.

Herod represents a wilfulness that is not offered into the service of Christ; a wilfulness that is caught up in an earthliness or worldliness uninformed by spiritual truth. It is a wilfulness that fails to be mindful of spiritual realities; that acts only in accordance with the perception of our physical senses rather than seeing things as the manifestation and expression of spirit. We often think of this as the ego.

We lay a firm foundation for the future when we present the wilful elements within us to Christ, and when we worship him saying, *You be the king, the wise person, in my soul. Through you I will gain a peace that will enable me stand fast in difficult times*.

This lower expression of wilfulness (represented by Herod) can be very destructive, especially to new ideas, new thoughts, new expressions of consciousness. Herod's rageful order of the slaughter of all the male infants shows us the danger of such wilfulness. It represents the destruction of new and creative ideas before they have the chance to develop and be expressed. A view of life dominated by sense perception and forgetful of spiritual reality feels threatened by anything new and creative that emerges in us through the action of spirit – and it lashes out, violently, destructively.

In his Advent reflection for today, Rev Mario, alerts us to this danger:

*The spiritual point of view of this story warns us [he says] to be careful with the Herod within us, so that this wilful element does not destroy the new born spirit within our soul.*

*It is so wonderful to have the first experience of*

*Christ and to be conscious of it, but eventually, like everything else, you may get used to it, and then self-will may well take over and try to destroy that most precious element and power within your heart. Protect it well. Let both wisdom and love nurture the new-born Christ within your soul.*

Mario then reminds us of the means of protection we have available to us as described by Paul in Ephesians 6:

*Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breast-plate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance.*

The items that make up the armour of God are, in fact, the qualities of truth, righteousness, faith, peace, sensitive will, and devotion. None of these qualities should be missing, for they make up the totality of a spiritual person. They enable us to be spiritual individuals who have transformed our desire nature dominated by sense perception into positive and spiritual purposefulness.

**Truth** is connected with the working of Christ within our soul, our ability to be real to ourselves and others, and with the working of Christ within the evolution of the world. It has an affinity with spiritual perception, with understanding the reality of the working of the Gods within evolution.

**Righteousness** means “to be good” or “to do the good”. It is the ability to do the right thing at the right moment – not to be swayed by false feelings and emotions, and neither to be subject to wrong thinking or hang-ups.

**Faith** is the intelligent knowingness that assures the existence of another realm, another goal, and another purpose beyond

the worldly horizon. It gives the impetus and knowledge that the heavens are, indeed, steering human progress.

**Peace** is born out of the grace of faith. You can only be peaceful when you know that the path you are treading is purposeful, and will eventually lead you to your goal and higher purposes. Peace does not mean a change of circumstances. It does not mean that you can sit back and let the world flow past. It does not mean being passive, rather it means doing what needs to be done and, in that purposeful activity, finding greater stillness.

The **helmet of salvation** protects the brain which houses our thinking power –earthly as well as heavenly – and has the ability to perceive above and beyond the borders of our existence; the capacity to develop the channels needed for spiritual perception and understanding. It is through the brain that we become aware of ourselves – not only of our littleness, imperfections and shortcomings, but also of our salvation. It is through our thinking power that we become aware of Christ, and know that wholemaking power is working in and through us.

*The word of God is revealed to us when we need it. Whenever we need to defend our own integrity, our inner I AMness, the word of God reveals itself and tells us how to use the sword – the will – in order to conquer the darker forces existing within and around us.*

When Paul finally mentions the **sword**, we realise that all along he has been writing about the three elements which assist the human being towards perfection. Up to this point Paul has been talking about the development of the thinking and feeling aspects, but with the mention of the *sword of the spirit* he arrives at the willing element. The sword represents the spiritual will which can only be exercised by spirit in a spiritual manner, and it has nothing whatsoever to do with wilfulness. The will is the *word of God*. Not the word of God as it is portrayed in the Bible, but rather the word and will of God that comes to us during the night when we are asleep, or when we are meditating, or when we are still and at ease. The word of God is revealed to us when we need it. Whenever we need to defend our own integrity, our

inner I AMness, the *word of God* reveals itself and tells us how to use the sword – the will – in order to conquer the darker forces existing within and around us.

Silence brings forth wisdom. Silence brings forth insight. Silence gives us serenity. Silence brings us closer to God. Silence is learning. Silence brings peace and devotion. Silence fills the soul with the contents of the spirit.

Paul gives us a recipe using thinking, feeling and willing as the ingredients. These three elements are heavenly, spiritual, and full of power. Because they are spiritual, we have to discover and use them in a spiritual manner, and that is why Paul admonishes us to use **prayer** as the instrument. Prayer means to be identified with Christ. It means to be on equal terms with him, to speak as friend to friend, as soul to soul, and as spirit to spirit. It is not a mere mumbling of words, but rather a heart-felt communication.

Developing these qualities protects the newly emergent Christedness within our being from the rageful destructiveness of our willfulness and ego.

### **Joseph and Mary and the Flight into Egypt – Protecting and Nurturing Our Emergent Christedness**

Matthew's Gospel also alerts us to the significant role Joseph and Mary and their flight into Egypt play in our work of protecting and nurturing the newly emergent Christedness within us. We know that Joseph and Mary represent our wisdom and love, and from Matthew's account it is clear that our wisdom in particular must be alert, responsive and active.

Joseph, of course, means much more than wisdom. *God shall enlarge you. God will make you victorious. God will add more and more and more to you. God will make you perfect, and you will walk in the centre of his perfect will.* That is what the name Joseph means.

Joseph also means silence. Did you notice in the reading from St Matthew that Joseph did not utter a single word? Mary had a lot to say after the angel had departed; but Joseph, not a word. He just did as he was instructed. He believed his dreams and acted upon them. Silence brings forth wisdom. Silence brings forth insight. Silence gives us serenity. Silence brings us closer to God. Silence is learning. Silence brings peace and devotion. Silence fills the soul with the contents of the spirit.

Joseph trusted his dreams, and therefore represents imagination as well – one who can be still and in the silence behold the heavens opened and perceive the workings of the kingdom of the Gods.

During the twelve days and holy nights that comprise the Christmas festival we need to submit our will to Christ, and use the faculty of willing spiritually, purposefully, in order to hold at bay the busyness and activity of everyday living. We must use our will to work to make time to be still, silent and beholding of all that the heavens stream toward us. Then the wisdom this builds up within us, and the love that rises up in us in response, will indeed protect and nurture our new-born Christedness towards maturity.

### **Conclusion**

The day draws near when Christ's glory will make radiant the dark night of our longing. This Christmas-time, may we each utilise the wealth of our resources to protect and nurture the new spiritual life emerging within us through the action of his spirit. May Christ's life grow to maturity in us, and may our being and living proclaim his glory.

So shall it be.

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*An address for the Cosmic Mass,  
Fourth Sunday in Advent, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2009  
The Centre in Melbourne*



*Published by ICA Press – the publishing division of  
The Centre  
The Independent Church of Australia  
The Independent Church in New Zealand  
Het Esoterisch Christelijk Centrum in The Netherlands*

And when the birth has occurred within us, then the work, or focus, of the twelve days and holy nights of the spiritual festival of Christmas is protecting, nurturing, maturing that newly-born aspect of Christedness which is the gift of the heavens to us.