

Daily Reflections



LOVE AMID

By Sister Bernie Inocencio, CSJ

Centering

*I was born in the still of the night,
Wrapped in love, not clothed in light.
The world was cold, yet near to Me,
A humble gift for all to see.*

*No crown of gold, no royal bed,
A manger's straw beneath My head.
But angels sang, their voices soared,
For heaven's plan was now restored.*

*I am the light the darkness fears,
I am the hope through all your tears.
Come to Me, and you will see,
Love was born tonight — through Me.*

Mary's arms became My throne,

*Her gentle heart, My earthly home.
Joseph's faith, so strong, so true,
Carried Me — and carried you.*

*Though I am small, My love is wide,
I came to heal, not just to guide.
Every soul, both far and near,
I hold them close, I draw them near.*

*I am the peace the world will find,
The song that stills the storming mind.
Come to Me, your hearts to free —
For love was born in Bethlehem, through Me.*

*Sleep now, world, beneath My star.
I am with you — just as you are.*

**"VOICE OF THE MANGER" - AI-GENERATED CHRISTMAS SONG - CHRISTIAN MUSIC
COLLECTIVE**

Excerpts From Today's Readings

*Stephen, filled with grace and power,
was working great wonders and signs among the people.
Certain members of the so-called Synagogue of Freedmen,
Cyrenians, and Alexandrians,
and people from Cilicia and Asia,
came forward and debated with Stephen,
but they could not withstand the wisdom
and the spirit with which he spoke.*

*When they heard this, they were infuriated,
and they ground their teeth at him.
But he, filled with the Holy Spirit,
looked up intently to heaven
and saw the glory of God
and Jesus standing at the right hand of God,
and he said,
“Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man
standing at the right hand of God.”
But they cried out in a loud voice, covered their ears,
and rushed upon him together.
They threw him out of the city and began to stone him.*

*The witnesses laid down their cloaks
at the feet of a young man named Saul.
As they were stoning Stephen, he called out
“Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.”*

ACTS 6:8-10, 7:54-59

*“When they hand you over,
do not worry about how you are to speak
or what you are to say.
You will be given at that moment what you are to say.
For it will not be you who speak
but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.
You will be hated by all because of my name,
but whoever endures to the end will be saved.”*

MATTHEW 10:19-20, 22

Reflection

In my younger years, I found it quite odd that the readings for the days after Christmas carry a somber ambiance. These were some of my thoughts back then: Should we not be joyful, after all, the Savior was born, the Prince of Peace has come? Why does the Christmas season include the martyrdom of Stephen and the murder of the holy innocents?

As I became mature in faith, I found the story of Stephen -- though intense, tragic, and filled with the people's defiance -- transcendent. Stephen was radiant with wisdom, grace and power from above. He, with steadfast faith, was unperturbed even at the sight of the heavens and maybe even with the insight that he was at death's door. ***Blessed are they who put their trust in God!*** He immediately surrendered his fate and spirit to the God he loved.

Adding to the somber atmosphere of today's readings is Jesus' solemn and serious warning and challenge in the Gospel. It was both a warning and a challenge, yet it was reassuring. Reassuring because Jesus said ***we will be given what we need at that moment, and whoever endures until the end will be saved.*** I choose to believe and hang on to that.

I found the thread in today's readings as I noticed this little quote my friend framed and sold at her church's fundraiser. It said: FIND THE LOVE IN EACH CROSS.

Jesus, our Eternal King, came to this world, LOVE personified beyond our imagination. This is what Christmas is all about -- a love that overcame time, space, distance, divinity and humanity, and the tragedy of and triumph over death. This is

what Jesus came for: to be God's love expressed in Jesus' human life -- from his humble birth and compassionate ministry, to his ignominious death and glorious resurrection.

With God's grace, Stephen found that meaning and that gift. He believed, endured, loved, and was saved. He had that deep joy that fueled deeper love and resilience in adversities, and which made him capable of loving others.

I think that was what Saul saw that made a great impact on him.



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For Pondering

- During this Christmas season, how can you cultivate a steadfast faith and profound inner joy like Stephen's, that remains unperturbed by life's busy-ness, adversities, and even tragedy?
- During this Christmas season, in what ways can you actively "find the love in each cross" within your own life, transforming moments of suffering into opportunities for deeper love, resilience, and powerful witness to others?

For Prayer

*O Divine Love,
You who bridged the chasm of divinity and humanity,
Teach us the wisdom Stephen knew:
That the joy of Your coming is found not just in the manger,
but in the shadow of the cross.
In moments of trial, when the world turns against us,
grant us the grace to look up, steadfast and unperturbed.
May we find the love in each heavy cross we bear,
radiating Your power and enduring until the end.
Fuel our faith with that deep joy,
that we may surrender our spirit wholly to You,
who conquered death through love.
Amen.*

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