

*Stjepan Lice*

# At the Source of Love

The Blessing of Jesus' childhood



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Sarajevo, 2010

“Keeping in mind one of the greatest mysteries of our holy faith, that our heavenly Father chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the Mother of his Son, who she conceived through the Holy Spirit and thus the incarnated Son of God, Jesus Christ, for the glory of the Father and our salvation became dependent on his Mother Mary, the Congregation of the Infant Jesus was founded, so that the sisters would always contemplate this great mystery when the Son of God became man (25 March), when he was born (25 December) and when he was revealed to the world (6 January).”

J. Stadler, The incomplete handwritten letter on the founding of the Congregation of the Sisters Servants of the Infant Jesus. The original can be found in the Archives of the Sisters SMI in Sarajevo.

## Preface

God has spoken to mankind throughout history in many ways. He spoke to him in the gentlest fashion through his Son Jesus Christ. The fullness of God's gentleness undertook the fullness of pain and inspired a total giving. From then onward, gentleness, pain and giving are united in the reality of the blessing God constantly blesses mankind and his life with on earth.

In Jesus Christ, God entered human history in a most innocent and daring way: with a childlike and brotherly heart. With a child's steps he began walking on the human journey. With a brotherly heart he came to encounter each man.

One can only follow Jesus in this spirit with a childlike and brotherly heart. And for a man's heart to be childlike and brotherly, one requires courage in everything. It is important to be decisive to the end and live the Gospels and not to leave out anything from the Gospels.

The child Jesus reveals to us that to live means to be born. The secret of birth is written in each encounter with people and with God.

We only truly get to know God when we experience that we are his children and therefore brothers and sisters to each other. For this reason we cannot come to God unless we reach out to people. One cannot receive God in one's heart – in one's childlike heart – unless we accept people in it also.

*Stjepan Lice*



Sarajevo, Christmas 2010

Christmas is the feast of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ and each year it reminds us of God's eternal love towards us all. We the Sisters Servants of the Infant Jesus celebrate this year the 120th anniversary of the founding of our Congregation and with profound reverence, we come before the Lord as the first shepherds did to adore Him with grateful hearts. With faith and trust in God, we aspire to be part of the righteous nation which keeps faith, in perfect peace (cf. Is 26:2-3). As in the past, may the message of Christmas fill our hearts now and in the future with love towards our neighbour.

Together with all the Sisters of the Province of the Immaculate Conception of the B.V.M. of Sarajevo, I wish you dear brother/sister, a Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year!

Sr. M. Marina Piljić  
Provincial Superior

## *The Incarnation*



*he Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us. God's love, his goodness, took on flesh and dwelt in us.*

A new world was conceived and incarnated. The source of goodness entered the world and united itself to it. From that time onward all transience has been filled with eternity. It now flows into eternity.

All divisions have been eliminated by Jesus' incarnation. There no longer exists any abyss or gap between God and mankind. Nothing separates us from God anymore, except emptiness if we decide to choose it. Oh if we could only avoid separating ourselves from our souls or from others! Oh if we could only live our lives with gratitude!

Father, may it be unto us according to your word. May the world constantly renew itself through your love and ours. *Until eternity.*





And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. (Jn 1:14)

## *The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Elizabeth*



Gratitude motivates us to quickly embark on our journey towards life, to all that can be foreseen and unforeseen. Gratitude for the calling we have received to become sharers in God's history with mankind, instruments of his love, stewards of his blessings.

Jesus' heartbeat could be felt in Mary's body. Mary lived her days with a fervent and devout heart. Jesus' heart does not cease to beat within us, therefore each heart and every person is called to be a servant and creator of eternal love.

We are called to bless the world we live in, to reach out and transfigure it with blessings, to never deny anyone God's blessings and our own.

Blessed are we who are invited to make of our lives a service of love! Blessed are we who have been filled with God's love! Oh that it could be fulfilled through us as well!



Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! (Lk 1:42)

## *The Nativity*



*Through the tender mercy of our God* the child Jesus was born amongst us. For us and for all creatures.

Immeasurable love chose weakness as its destiny and united itself to it. Jesus came to us in a small form. As a little child he was placed in our hands and our hearts.

God chose to accompany mankind on his earthly journey in humility and smallness, so that through them we might experience the fullness of our encounter with him.

He called us not just to become disciples, but brothers to the most lowly. *To rise up to the fullness of our divine son-ship.*

Oh if only my soul and my being never outgrow you sweet baby Jesus! Oh that I may never outgrow you!



Through the tender mercy of our God, when the Day shall dawn upon us from on high. (cf. Lk 1:78)

## *The Adoration of the Shepherds*

*The good news of the birth of Jesus, a great joy for all the people, was announced to shepherds before all the others. To the neglected ones of the time. The good news was announced to give light to those in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide the feet of all people into the way of peace.*

*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased* sang the angels to the shepherds. And their song to this day has not died down. The song never stops searching for the neglected ones of all times, God's lowly ones. The humility of God never ceases to reach out to them.

God searches for his friends amongst those who have been turned away by others. He who shines his face upon everyone, enlightens their hearts as well.

Enlighten my world Jesus, in me and around me. Never let me extinguish your light within me or smother it in others through my actions.

*Let's go therefore to Bethlehem!*



Let us go over to Bethlehem. (Lk 2:15)



## *The Circumcision*

**J**esus entered the history of his people by accepting all of its traditions, especially the noble Law of his ancestors. By entering history, he raised it up to a higher level through love. His belonging to this people though, did not separate him from others. He knew well that all generations of all nations of all times, are children of his Father and part of God's family.

He taught us that we are not identified by our circumcision or non-circumcision, but by our living as new beings.

We are identified by the fact that we belong to Jesus and this gives our identity a new and lively meaning. With his life, Jesus shows us everything that unites us and leads us to one another.

Oh if only each step we take in life and each step of mankind through generations could be a part of his love!





When he was circumcised, he was called Jesus. (Lk 2:21)

## *The Adoration of the Magi*



Jesus once cried out: *I thank thee, Father, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes!*

While still a babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, three wise men, three kings came to adore him. Their wisdom and power did not make them lose their humility. Only those persons who are upright in spirit and with uplifted hearts can bow down before a child, before every child, especially the child Jesus. Especially those uplifted after having been shattered by pain or moved.

The Magi show us that it is in a childlike spirituality that one finds the most profound wisdom, all that truly makes us human and at the same time God's children. They constantly remind us to give to Jesus not our surplus, but our entire existence, all that we are and have.

Sweet baby Jesus, accept my childlike heart and lead me all the days of my life on the path of spiritual childhood!



We have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him. (Mt 2:2)

## *The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple*

**A**nd when the time came, Mary and Joseph presented Jesus in the temple. They acted *as is written in the law of the Lord: Every male firstborn shall be called holy to the Lord.*

At that moment in the temple there was a man inspired by Holy Spirit who in the child Jesus recognized *a light for all nations*, a light that many will consider a *sign of contradiction*.

From that time onwards and for eternity, those whose eyes and hearts are open to his light, see his salvation prepared for all nations, for every man. Those that close their hearts to him, see in him a sign of contradiction.

From that time onwards and for eternity, every child is loved by God as a firstborn. And we are all invited to present each other, our children and ourselves to God, each and every day.

Oh if only my eyes could see your salvation present in the hearts of those I love! In the hearts of every person!



Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word;  
for mine eyes have seen thy salvation. (cf. Lk 2:29-30)

## *The Flight into Egypt*

*H*e came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him he gave power to become children of God. Jesus once said: *Unless you become like children, you shall not enter the kingdom of God.* The depths of love shall remain unreachable for you.

Truly, *God so loved the world that he gave his only Son* so that no one would perish, but that a childlike spirit would be released in everyone and that a childlike heart be enkindled in all.

During this journey, it was not difficult for Jesus to be an exile and homeless. It was not hard for him not to have *a place to lay down his head*. He knew that this was the lot of those who have offered their hearts as a resting place for others and the destiny of those who reach out to others with an open heart.

God truly loves the world this way.





He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. (Jn 1:11)

## *Time in Egypt*



In Bethlehem there was no place for them in the inn. They could not go back to their place in Nazareth and they had to build a home in exile.

Many share the same fate. The family is at all times in exile. The family which is the centre, the cornerstone of humanity, of God's world and his history with mankind.

There is no greater courage other than that required of family life and responsibility for a family. At the same time, there is nothing simpler and more humane, nothing nobler than family life and a family atmosphere in the world.

Truly, the person whose heart is his home, whose home is comprised of the hearts of his loved ones, can surely overcome anything. He is a builder of a family society and shares in family blessings forever.


*Let not our hearts be troubled nor afraid. Let us believe in God!*





Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me. (Jn 14:1)

## *Return to Nazareth*

he return to Nazareth is a return to the heart of the world. Jesus along with Mary and Joseph will live thirty years of his life there, living it in the daily routines and demands of life.

With his return to Nazareth, Jesus' first miracle begins, that is, the blessing of daily work.

Jesus said: *Let the little ones come to me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* Little ones know how the value of their home and how to build up the kingdom of heaven in their daily lives.


The entire life of mankind is a journey back home. Only those with a wise heart, with a heart made wise from smallness and simplicity will know through God's love that our entire life journey is towards home and its hugs.

God's love is a home that is wider than all space and time, wider than all of human history and all of eternity.



“Let the children come to me, do not hinder them;  
for to such belongs the kingdom of God. (Mk 10:14)

## *Jesus' life in Nazareth*

 he Evangelist summarizes his account of Jesus' life in Nazareth in only a few words: *And the child Jesus grew and became strong, filled with wisdom and the favour of God was upon him.*

The home that Mary and Joseph prepared for Jesus offered him everything he needed and was not an obstacle for him. During his years in his home in Nazareth, Jesus matured for the years of his public ministry, for all that life would ask of him and all that God entrusted to him.


In his account on Jesus' life in Nazareth, the evangelist adds a few simple and holy words: *and he was obedient to them.* Incredible, yet so often the case: God was obedient to man. Through all centuries, God in his love is obedient to mankind.

Oh if only our hearts could be touched by the incredible obedience of God! Oh if only our lives and our love could be united to it in everything!



“And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. (Lk 2:51)

## *Jesus in the Temple with the Teachers and the Scribes*

 Jesus sat in the temple amongst the teachers and the scribes. He listened to them and asked questions. Jesus also sits today in the temple of our lives and our souls, in the temple of our relationships, listening to us and asking questions.

He says to us: “Do you not know that you must be in that which is our Father's in his will”. And his will is life. Love to the end.

His wish is that we become pupils of the little ones, that we become servants of life and let his love dwell in us so that our joy may be complete.

Jesus calls us to offer the *knowledge of salvation to his people*, that we faithfully offer it and live it, and that we grow in it each day of our lives.

Oh if only we could understand with our hearts and live with our entire being the words of Jesus!



The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. (Jn 6:63)



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