



Wisdom from the Desert

The devil appeared to a brother in the form of an Angel of light and said to him: „I am the Angel Gabriel and I have been sent to you.“ But the brother replied: „Think about it. Were you not sent to someone else? I certainly do not deserve a visit from an Angel.“ Then the devil quickly vanished.

This Month's Heartfelt Matters

- Let us pray for all people that they may take more time for GOD, that a light of longing may light up in them, for GOD seeks man and man seeks GOD. „Saint Joseph, help those who are searching for the path that GOD wants them to go, to find it.“



How happy indeed are the children of GOD who rely completely on His Providence! Nothing can happen to them that is not for their own good.

Now I wish everyone a very happy Christmas Season – joy and peace in their hearts.

I say goodbye again with many best wishes. Kind regards and may the blessing of Saint Joseph accompany you,

Sister Paula



December 2023

Lay Community of St Joseph

A Christmas Story

It has been a dark night for a long time. The moon did not rise. The embers of the fireplace drew peculiar contours on our faces and gave us a shape that we did not possess. Moshe ran a burnt twig through the ashes.

„If you locked it inside you, your request would not worry me so much. But everything you see and hear here, you are shouting out into the world. Do not defend yourself! I know that an archaeologist cannot keep the findings of his work to himself. But now you are asking me to do something that has nothing to do with archaeology. Is that not right?“ – „It is,“ I had to admit.



Moshe's voice sounded uncertain: „I regret that I even mentioned this event. But as you wish – you will know.“ Somewhere in the rocky desert, a wild dog barked. „The event I am about to tell you has been passed down



in our tribe – or rather in our clan – for centuries. The father tells it to his son at a special, appropriate time. In this way the story is passed down from one generation to the next, from great-grandfather to grandfather, father, son and grandson. Before you know it, the grandson becomes a great-grandfather again and the chain continues ...“ I nodded.

„In GOD’s name,“ Moshe began hesitantly. „When back then the star with the tail appeared in the sky, announcing the Coming of the Promised One, the King, the Messiah, the Nativity of JESUS CHRIST, Angels came to the camp of the shepherds in Gadera in order to deliver this news to them. You know full well that the village of Gadera is nowhere to be found. It has disappeared. The Angels spoke to the shepherds and urged them to go to Bethlehem. They all rose. Above their heads they heard the sound: ‚Glory to GOD in the highest and peace on earth to men of good will!‘ I know that the second half of the Angel’s message is sometimes translated differently today, but that is irrelevant to our story. So, the shepherds rose to set off. Ephraim too stood up. They all focused their eyes on his dark face and then looked shyly from one to the other. You must know that Ephraim was the black sheep amongst the shepherds. He was not a good man, he sinned when he was with his flock, at home in the family, under the tents. If anything was certain at this very moment, it was that Ephraim was not allowed to come before the countenance of the Newborn. The people did not love him – if they did not even hate him. But we humans are not all equally righteous. And so, no one said a word when Ephraim joined them. On the way to the stable in Bethlehem, people already began crowding the spot. In fact, the astonishing



news came up that three wise kings from the East want to visit the manger of the Newborn with rich gifts.

The first difficulty arose in front of the stable in Bethlehem, where several Angels stood and let the visitors in. So far, the shepherds had not noticed that anyone had been turned away. But what would happen to Ephraim? Angels do know everything! And so it came to pass: one of the Angels looked the shepherd with the dark face sternly in the eye and then domineeringly pointed backwards with his snow-white right hand. „Turn back!“ this gesture meant. The shepherds around Ephraim also stopped walking. There was silence for a moment. Ephraim lowered his head and stepped from one leg to the other. Then he slowly turned round, pushed one or two men aside and disappeared into the darkness, seemingly right under the star of Bethlehem. The others entered, fell to their knees, and remained in this position for a long time, searching for words of prayer.

New visitors turned up behind their backs. When someone’s hands laid down gold, frankincense and myrrh at the manger, everyone knew that the kings, who had been announced, had also arrived. At last, the shepherds raised their heads to look at the Child. But the manger was empty. Where was the Child? The horrified eyes of the shepherds desperately searched for Him in the twilight of the stable. He was not there. The Child was gone! Where had He disappeared to?

Strangely, the other visitors gazed devoutly into the empty manger. There was so much loving tenderness in their eyes



that one only feels at the sight of a newborn, immaculate child. It could not be otherwise, the manger only appeared empty to the eyes of the shepherds. But why? What were they to blame for, not being granted the supreme gift of being allowed to look the Redeemer in the face? And was it even possible that He lay there for some and did not show Himself to others? Embarrassed, they bowed before the manger and then turned towards the door. At that moment, framed by the door, they saw the Newborn; He was lying in the arms of their Ephraim. They both returned to the stable. As Ephraim passed the group of shepherds, the Child made him pause.

,I would have missed him here, this shepherd,' He said. ,Why should Ephraim of all people not visit Me when you others have come? Perhaps you told yourselves that this joy was not meant for him. It is. How little you differ from one another! So I had to go and fetch Ephraim, even though My little feet are not yet

used to the hard road. I would have been very sorry if we had missed each other. Now go home together. Peace be with you!' The shepherds returned to their flocks, praising and glorifying the LORD for all they had heard and seen. That is all!"



I remained silent. What should I say at that moment

after all? Moshe spoke quietly to himself: „You are silent. I immediately thought that this event was not for your ears.“ I smiled. „Oh yes, it is, Moshe. It is even more for my heart.“ –



„You are only saying what everyone before you said when they learnt of this event. Humans will be humans and the love of GOD, which descended to them in the newborn Child, is also unchanging ...“

The eternal Word is still being born here and now.
Where? Where you have lost yourself in yourself.

Heaven descends and becomes earth,
when will the earth rise up and become Heaven?
If CHRIST is born in Bethlehem a thousand times
and not in you, you will remain eternally lost.

Enlarge your heart and GOD will enter there,
you shall be His Kingdom of Heaven, He will be your King.

