

## Prayer for our Christmas meal

Lord Jesus, in the peace of this season  
our spirits are joyful:

With the animals and angels,  
the shepherds and stars,  
with Mary and Joseph  
we sing God's praise.

By your coming  
may the hungry be filled with good things,  
and may our table and home be blessed.

Let us pray to the Father:

Bless us O Lord, and these Thy gifts,  
which we are about to receive from Thy bounty  
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Eternal God, this joyful day  
is radiant with the brilliance of your one true light.

May that light illuminate our hearts  
and shine in our words and deeds.

May the hope, the peace, the joy,  
and the love represented by the birth in Bethlehem  
fill our lives and become part of all that we say and do.

May we share the divine life of your son Jesus Christ,  
even as he humbled himself to share our humanity.  
Bless us and bless the feast that you have provided for us;  
let us be thankful for the true gift of Christmas - your Son,  
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Mary, mother of the Word-made-flesh: Pray for us  
St Joseph, Guardian of the Christ-child: Pray for us  
St Alphonse, Pray for us. Amen.

# Christmas 2014



**St Alphonse  
Luxembourg**

## **The Crib, the Cross & the Eucharist**

The statues of the Holy Family displayed here in our crèche were re-discovered in St Alphonse in December 2013, having been hidden away in December 1939 when the people of Luxembourg were living in fear of invasion. The figures are beautiful, and also fragile. The hands of the Christ-child were missing, but have been sensitively restored by a parishioner.

Along with the Cross and the Eucharist (symbolised by the altar) our tableau this year represents the three-fold theme found often in the writings of St Alphonse, the founder of the Redemptorists.

## **Meditation on the Crib**

### **The Son of God has made himself little, in order to make us great**

*(St Alphonse)*

The spiritual writings of St Alphonse focus above all on the Crib, the Cross and the Eucharist. Meditating on these great Christian themes leads us to prayer, conversation with God, which in turn lets God's life grow within us. Alphonse is constantly trying to communicate the passionate intensity of God's love, the God who went to 'crazy' extremes to save us.

### **The approachable God**

We would be confused if God remained distant and unknowable; we would be afraid if we but glimpsed God's awesome majesty; we would despair and think ourselves lost if we saw ourselves in the light of God's holiness; but when we contemplate the infant of Bethlehem, the child in the manger, the littleness God has assumed, we can approach with confidence and truly believe that God has come to save us.

Alphonse goes further — he says that our Redeemer took many and various forms to attract the love of humankind 'God, who is unchangeable, appears now as a child in a stable, now as a boy in a workshop, now as a criminal on a cross, and now as bread upon the altar. In these various guises Jesus chose to exhibit himself to us; but whatever character he assumed, it was always the character of a lover.'

### **Praying because we love God**

This is the context for Alphonse's teaching on prayer: it is the conversation of lovers, besotted with each other, crazy with love. He imagines God saying to us, 'You were not yet in the world...and I already loved you. As long as I am God, I love you; as long as I have loved myself, I have also loved you'.

### **Prayer**

Jesus, Word made flesh, God-with-us; Child of Nazareth, Eternal Son of the Father; Beginning and End, Saving Lord: be born again in me this Christmas. Help me to see the world through your eyes: with infinite love, with mercy, and with a desire for peace in every heart. Amen.

## **Reflection: Dancing**

The universe from which Love sprang started with a Tiny Bang when Love, to everyone's surprise, came dancing out of paradise, dancing into night and day, dancing into DNA, dancing to a different drum, dancing into kingdom come, dancing with a virgin stranger, dancing in the dirty manger, dancing ever undefiled, dancing as a little child.

*Text from St Johns Church, West Ealing, UK.*

## **Litany for Christmas**

Holy Child

*R/ We rejoice in your presence*

Hope of the nations

Saviour of the world

Our inspiration and our hope

Gentle and humble in heart

Giver of life

Wonderful counsellor

Prince of Peace

Son of God and son of Mary

Word made flesh

Comfort and Consolation

Wisdom of the ages

Our brother and our friend

With the Father and the Holy Spirit, One God

Amen