



*Christmas
Readings
2015*

*From the Judeo - Christian Scriptures
and the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg*

Merry Christmas

from your friends in the New Church.

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“Becoming Truly Human”

Introduction

Our Christmas readings this year are gathered around the theme of true humanness. What does it mean to become more truly human—in our individual lives, in relationships, in marriage and family dynamics, in our business dealings with others, and in all areas of human endeavour? What does it mean to become more deeply human, little by little, day by day, as the Lord works to fashion us into new creatures?

In one sense, the Lord came on earth to demonstrate what it means to be truly human. In all of His words and actions, He showed us qualities of understanding, mercy, compassion, goodness, truthfulness, faithfulness, wisdom of life, and love. These qualities (and many others) are qualities that He strives to build in each one of us—as we cooperate with Him in our spiritual development, and as we strive each day to become more truly human.

So this year we will look at the Christmas story with an eye to seeing all that is truly human there: human qualities that are reflected in the lives of the people who surrounded the Lord at His birth, and human qualities that He Himself embodied as He “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and people”. The Lord our God is the perfect embodiment of true humanness; and by His coming on earth and His life choices there, He made it possible for us to become more truly human ourselves, as we are created anew in His image and likeness.

Format: Each daily reading in this booklet features part of the Christmas story, followed by commentary from the 18th century theologian, Emanuel Swedenborg. Each reading and commentary touch on one part of the divine birth in us. At the end of the readings for each day is a set of reflections, together with some questions for consideration. There are twenty-six readings in all, designed to carry you from December 1st through to Christmas day, with one extra for the day after, looking forward into the new year. Our hope is that these readings, together with worship services and church events available throughout the world, will provide a sense of uplift and spiritual renewal in your life this Christmas season, as you continue on the pathway to becoming more truly human.

“The Word Became Flesh”

Our God In Human Form

December 1

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.... All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of all.... That was the true Light which gives light to every person coming into the world.... And as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-14, parts)

Out of pure love, thus out of pure mercy, the Lord took on a human manifestation, and underwent the severest temptations, and finally the passion on the Cross, that He might save the human race. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 9528)

The Lord's divine human is pure love. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 2343)

Now that the Lord's human nature has been glorified (or made divine) it cannot be thought of as something merely human but as divine love in human form. It is love for the whole human race, and it consists in His wanting to save us, make us blissful and happy forever, and give His divinity to us as our own, as far as we can take hold of it. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 4735.2)

Reflection: *Christmas is a time when we celebrate the Lord's birth into the world as a divinely human being. It says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory". In what way(s) do you perceive the glory, goodness, and love of the Lord in His coming on earth? What is one way in which the Lord has made you more truly human over the years? What is one way in which your life could be transformed this Christmas season?*

Notes:

12 2

“This Is Our God”

This Is A God I Can Believe In And Love

December 2

And it will be said in that day:

“Behold, this is our God;

We have waited for Him, and He will save us.

This is the Lord;

We have waited for Him;

We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.”

(Isaiah 25:9)

The reason why we must believe (i.e., have faith) in God the Saviour Jesus Christ is that it is faith in a visible God, in whom there is what is invisible. What is faith without a goal towards which it is directed? Is it not like a look directed towards the universe, a look which falls as if on empty space and thus comes to naught? In brief, faith in an invisible God is a blind faith, since the human mind cannot, in that case, see its God. It is, however, different with faith in the Lord God the Saviour, since He is both God and human, and can be approached and seen in the mind's eye. (*True Christian Religion*, no. 339)

The angels in heaven know and acknowledge nothing else to be divine than the Lord's divine humanity; for this they can form a mental picture of and can love. But they cannot form any such picture of, nor therefore love, the Divine called the Father, since this is incomprehensible, in keeping with the Lord's words stating that they have never heard His voice nor seen His shape (John 5:37). What is incapable of being seen or heard is incapable also of passing into the mind to form a mental picture. It is also incapable of passing into any affection and love. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 10267)

Reflection: *It has been said, “You can’t love what you don’t know.” The more we know about someone, the more deeply we can love him or her. This is just as true in our relationship with the Lord as it is with other relationships. One of the great benefits of the Lord’s birth and life on earth is that we get to see and know Him for all of His divinely human qualities, fully manifested and visible on earth. What affect does this have on your relationship with the Lord—to know Him as a living, breathing, interactive God (as compared to an infinite and unknowable force for good)?*

Notes:

12 3

“His Work is Before Him” Making Each of Us Truly Human

December 3

Indeed the Lord has proclaimed
To the end of the world:

“Say to the daughter of Zion,
‘Surely your salvation is coming;
Behold, His reward is with Him,
And His work before Him.’”

And they shall call them The Holy People,
The Redeemed of the Lord. (Isaiah 62:11-12)

Then God said, “Let Us make humankind in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created humankind in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

A person is indeed born a human being from his or her parents, but does not become truly human until he or she is born again from the Lord. Spiritual and heavenly life is what makes a person truly human. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 3860)

There cannot be anything fair, truly honest, and truly human except from God, and unless the Divine is in it. (*Apocalypse Explained*, no. 948)

Being born again (or regenerated) makes a person truly human and entirely different from animals. In this case he or she becomes an heir of the Lord's kingdom. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 5160)

Reflection: *The Lord is a truly, divinely human God. He wants to make each one of us truly human as well; and He does so through a process of spiritual rebirth or “regeneration”. What does the idea of being “truly human” mean to you? What does the idea of being “spiritually reborn” or “regenerated” mean to you? What is one way in which you can become more truly human this Christmas season?*

Notes:

12

4

“The Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding” The Lord’s Divine Wisdom

December 4

There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse,
And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him,
The Spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The Spirit of counsel and might,
The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord
(Isaiah 11:1-2)

These words are said of the Lord, and they describe the divine truth, in which and from which are all wisdom and all understanding. “The spirit of Jehovah which rested upon Him” refers to the divine truth that was in the Lord when He was in the world, and which (since the glorification of His humanity) goes forth from Him. “The spirit of wisdom and understanding, and the spirit of counsel and might” means that He has divine wisdom and divine power from this source. (*Apocalypse Explained*, no. 696.17)

When it is said of the Lord that He has “wisdom,” it means that He has all wisdom, which is the Divine Providence; for true wisdom is to see what is conducive to anyone’s life to eternity, and to determine oneself according to that. This is done when a person not only knows these things and perceives them with his or her understanding, but also wills and does them. Divine wisdom is to provide these things with human beings; thus it is Divine Providence. (*Apocalypse Explained*, no. 338)

Reflection: *Wise words—infinately wise words—would one day come from the mouth of that little babe resting in a manger. One of today’s readings says that the Lord knows what is “conducive to anyone’s life to eternity”. It is that same wisdom that we strive for—to learn and practice what leads to an eternal life in heaven. Who is one person in your life who you consider to be truly wise? What is it about him or her that makes you think of him in that way? How can you be more like him or her today?*

Notes:

12 5

“He Will Feed His Flock Like a Shepherd” Gentle Strength

December 5

Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand,
And His arm shall rule for Him;
Behold, His reward is with Him,
And His work before Him.

He will feed His flock like a shepherd;
He will gather the lambs with His arm,
And carry them in His bosom,
And gently lead those who are with young.
(Isaiah 40:10-11)

This treats of the Lord’s coming. The “flock that He shall feed as a shepherd” means those who live a charitable life (i.e., a life of good will and good action). The “lambs that He shall gather into His arm” mean those who have a love for Him. (*Apocalypse Explained*, no. 314.2)

If anyone knows the nature of hell, and how high it rose to flood the entire world of spirits at the time of the Lord’s coming, as well as the power the Lord used to cast it down and scatter it, and afterwards to reduce it to order, it must make that person exclaim that that deed was entirely divine. The Lord employs similar divine power today to fight against hell in every person who is undergoing spiritual rebirth. (*True Christian Religion*, no. 123)

The Lord’s providence is an atmosphere of protecting and maintaining those who cannot protect and maintain themselves (referring to infants and young children). [One of the ways He protects and maintains them] is through His own love, which He implants in fathers, mothers and nurses. Their love is a love that comes from the Lord. (*Married Love*, no. 391)

Reflection: *The Lord is pictured as a gentle, watchful, and strong shepherd. His love is evident in the care of His sheep. He feeds them, gathers them with His arm, carries them in His bosom, and gently leads them. He also protects them from harm. One of today's readings likens this tender care to a parent's love for his or her children, who also need love, leadership, and protection. What do all of these images call to mind for you? How can they help you be a better you?*

Notes:

12

6

“Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God” Names & Qualities

December 6

For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. (Isaiah 9:6)

Can anyone fail to see that the Lord’s name in the Word does not mean merely His name, but acknowledging Him as Redeemer and Saviour, and at the same time obeying Him; and finally, having faith in Him? At baptism a child receives the sign of the cross on his or her forehead and chest, and this is a sign of initiation into the acknowledgment and worship of the Lord. One’s name also means one’s character. The reason is that in the spiritual world everyone is given a name to match his or her character. So naming someone a Christian means that his or her character is to be such that he will have (from Christ) faith in Christ and goodwill toward the neighbour. (*True Christian Religion*, no. 682)

When a quality of the Lord is thought of by people, the Lord becomes present with them, and when this quality is loved, the Lord is joined together with them. (*Apocalypse Explained*, no. 815)

The name Jesus refers to divine goodness, and the name Christ to divine truth. This may be seen from many places in the Lord’s Word. The reason why Jesus refers to divine goodness is that it means Safety, Salvation, and Saviour.

And as it means these, it means divine goodness, for it is from divine goodness, and so through the reception of that goodness, that all salvation comes. The reason why Christ refers to divine truth is that that name means Messiah, Anointed, and King. The divine truth itself is at the root of the Lord's being called "the King". (*Secrets of Heaven*, nos. 3003, 3009)

Reflection: *What qualities of the Lord do you associate with names of the Lord like Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace? What about other names like Shepherd, Jesus, Christ, Holy Spirit, Saviour? What are one or two of the Lord's many names that you would like to embody this Christmas, and on into the new year? How will you do that?*

Notes:

12

7

“Your Light Has Come!”

Enlightenment

December 7

The people who walked in darkness
Have seen a great light;
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,
Upon them a light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2)

Arise, shine;
For your light has come!
And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.
For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth,
And deep darkness the people;
But the Lord will arise over you,
And His glory will be seen upon you.
The Gentiles shall come to your light,
And kings to the brightness of your rising.
(Isaiah 60:1-3)

This refers to the Lord's coming. “Light” here means the divine truth emanating from the Lord, and “His glory” and “the brightness of His rising” mean everything visible in that light which has regard to the Lord, to faith in Him, and to love for Him. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 10574)

The Lord, who is light itself, flows into everyone; and if we possess truths from the Lord's Word, He makes them shine in us, in that way making them part of our faith. (*True Christian Religion*, no. 349)

[What if a wise person beheld a picture of God, depicted as] one divine person, with rays of heavenly light around his head, and with the label: “This is our God—at once Creator, Redeemer and Regenerator, and so Saviour.” Would not that wise person kiss such a picture and take it home in his or her pocket, so that his own mind, and those of his spouse, children, and household, might take pleasure in looking at it? (True Christian Religion, no. 296)

Reflection: *In order to become more truly human (or in order to receive truly human qualities from the Lord) we need the Lord’s “light” to shine on us. We need to understand who our God is, what He’s like, what he wants of us, and what He’s leading us toward. These are parts of our faith, pictured here as light shining into a dark world at the time of the Lord’s coming. What are one or two ways in which that light has come into your life and your “world” over the past year? What is one way in which you’d like it to come into your life today?*

Notes:

“They Were Both Blameless” Blamelessness, Innocence

December 8

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years. (Luke 1:5-7)

Those who are in a state of innocence wish to be led by the Lord and not by themselves. They love everything that is good and find delight in everything that is true, because they know and perceive that loving what is good, (that is, willing it and doing it) is loving the Lord, and loving truth is loving the neighbour. They live content with what is their own, whether it be little or much, because they know that they receive just as much as is good for them. They love nothing so much as to be led by the Lord, attributing all things they receive to Him; and because of this, they are kept apart from what is selfish. And to the extent that they are kept apart from this the Lord flows into them. As a result, whatever they hear from the Lord, whether through His Word or by means of preaching, they do not store up in their memory, but instantly obey it, that is, will it and do it. Such people for the most part appear outwardly simple, but inwardly they are wise and prudent. (*Heaven and Hell*, no. 278)

What is divine and the Lord's cannot be received except within innocence. Innocence is a willingness to be led by the Lord. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 9262; *Heaven and Hell* 281)

Innocence and peace are the two most intimate features of heaven. They are so called because they go forth directly from the Lord; for He is innocence itself and peace itself. (*Married Love*, no. 394)

Reflection: *We often associate innocence with the purity and untainted sweetness of infancy. The Lord's birth as a baby calls this reality to mind. It also reminds us that the Lord is the essence of innocence. In today's readings, innocence is described as a simple trust in the Lord, and a willingness to obey. It is a growing willingness to depend on the Lord for all that is wholesome, worthwhile, and good, and a desire to stand before Him with nothing to hide (blamelessness). What are one or two ways in which you are reaching for this kind of innocence at Christmastime this year? What "truly human" qualities is it bringing to your life?*

Notes:

12 9

“And Fear Fell Upon Him”

Holy Fear

December 9

So it was, that while he was serving as priest before God in the order of his division,...his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.... Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him.... And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. For he will be great in the sight of the Lord.... He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb.... He will also go before Him... ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:8-17, parts)

The angel said to Zacharias, “Fear not”. By “fear not” is meant resuscitation, and then adoration from the deepest humility. (*Apocalypse Revealed*, no. 56)

“Fear” is of two kinds—fear in what is not sacred, and fear in what is sacred. Fear in what is sacred is the fear in which good people dwell. This fear is called reverential fear, and it is the result of a person's wonder at and longing for what is divine. It is also the result of his or her love. The fear of love is a fear of harming the Lord in any way, or of injuring the neighbour in any way, thus of damaging what is good and true in any way, and consequently of harming the sacred things of love and faith and the resulting worship. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 3718)

When the Lord was in the world He was in two states, called the state of “exinanition” (emptying out) and the state of glorification (being made divine). The prior state, which was the state of emptying out, is described in many places in the Lord’s Word. This same state was His state of humility before the divinity within Him (the “Father”). But the state of glorification is also a state of union; and when that union was complete, He had "all power in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18). (*True Christian Religion*, no. 104)

Reflection: *The sense that something is sacred, and a fear that harm might be done to it:—this is what “holy fear” is all about. Christmas can be a time when what is truly important is brought to mind. In the midst of all the busyness of the season, there can be a reminder of the Lord and His hope for our salvation, of the relationships that are most important to us, and of the focus that prayer and worship can bring to our lives. In what way(s) can you work to have these sacred things more in the forefront of your mind today?*

Notes:

12

10

“How Shall I Know This?”

Doubt & Confidence

December 10

And Zacharias said to the angel, “How shall I know this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years.” And the angel answered and said to him, “I am Gabriel, who stands in the presence of God, and was sent to speak to you and bring you these glad tidings. But behold, you will be mute and not able to speak until the day these things take place, because you did not believe my words which will be fulfilled in their own time.” And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless. (Luke 1:18-22)

All spiritual conflict entails feelings of doubt regarding the Lord’s presence and mercy, regarding salvation, and other such things. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 2334.1)

The universal principle of faith on a person’s part is that he or she should believe in the Lord; for by believing in Him there is conjunction with Him and thereby salvation. To believe in the Lord is to have confidence that He saves; and as only those who live rightly can have this confidence, this, too, is meant by believing in Him. (*True Christian Religion*, paragraph, no. 2.3)

While He lived in the world the Lord was engaged repeatedly in conflicts brought about by temptations, and He was repeatedly victorious.

At that time the Lord was filled repeatedly with an inmost confidence and faith that, because it was pure love out of which He was fighting for the salvation of the whole human race, He could not but be victorious. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 1812.1)

Reflection: *Doubt and confidence are both parts of the human experience. Sometimes we may doubt the Lord's presence and help, or we may wonder about certain teachings in His Word. At other times we may feel spiritually confident. There is a healthy kind of doubt that we can have —referred to by Emanuel Swedenborg as "affirmative" doubt. Affirmative doubt is a kind of doubt in which we are willing to listen to the Lord, hear what He has to say, and be convinced by Him. It holds within it a quality of humility and a willingness to grow. What is one way in which you have experienced this kind of "affirmative" doubt in your spiritual walk with the Lord? In what way has this led to a greater confidence in the Lord and His leadership in your life?*

Notes:

12

11

“Thus Has the Lord Dealt with Me” A Desire to Be Useful

December 11

So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that he departed to his own house. Now after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived; and she hid herself five months, saying, “Thus the Lord has dealt with me, in the days when He looked on me, to take away my reproach among people.” (Luke 1:23-25)

All things connected with childbirth are used in the spiritual sense of the Lord’s Word to mean such things as are connected with spiritual birth, thus such as are connected with regeneration. The things connected with spiritual birth or regeneration are the truths of faith and the good deeds that arise out of goodwill to one’s neighbour. Through these a person is conceived and born anew. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 9325)

The kingdom of Christ, namely, heaven, is a kingdom of useful services. The reason is that the Lord loves all people and so wills well to all, and this means useful service. Now because the Lord performs useful services indirectly through angels, and in the world through people, therefore to those who faithfully perform useful services He gives a love of being useful and its reward. The reward is inner blessedness, and this blessedness is eternal happiness. (*Married Love*, no. 7)

According to useful services and the love of them, the inhabitants of heaven receive all their delight and blessedness; nor does heavenly joy come from any other source. (*Apocalypse Explained*, no. 1194)

Reflection: *Two babies are born in the Christmas story, bringing joy to their parents and to many others. In our experience too, children are born, and people rejoice. Within this simple fact of human existence, we have the opportunity to think about birth on a spiritual level. Within any desire to be good (i.e., to become more truly human) is the potential for useful action. There's something inherently "human" about being of service to others. These useful actions are like the birth of a child, and they have the potential for bringing similar joy. What are one or two useful things that you'd like to accomplish this Christmas season?*

Notes:

12

12

“The Virgins Name was Mary”

A Desire to Know the Life We Should Lead

December 12

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favoured one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!” But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Luke 1:26-33)

The virgin of whom the Lord was born symbolises the church as to a genuine affection for truth. (*God the Saviour*, no. 37—in *Posthumous Theological Works*)

A genuine affection for truth consists in willing and desiring to know the real truths of faith, with a view to putting them to good use, and for the sake of the life one should lead. Those with a genuine desire for truth examine the Scriptures and pray to the Lord for enlightenment; and when they receive it, their hearts rejoice. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 8993.3-4)

Affection or love constitutes the life of everyone. Consequently, those who are in a genuine affection for truth constantly serve the Lord, even when they are in their vocations, businesses, and employments; because the affection that is within reigns continually and serves. Moreover, this is the service the Lord desires. (*Apocalypse Explained*, no. 478.3)

Reflection: *It's not difficult to perceive goodness in Mary. She seems to have been a person who wanted to live a good life. Within this human being—who served the Lord in such a unique and powerful way—we see something equally useful that is part of our spiritual make-up. It's something that Emanuel Swedenborg calls an "affection" (or "desire") for truth in life. Within that affection is a wish to know the life we should lead, and a longing to serve the Lord and other human beings in useful ways. This affection/desire can lead to countless new states of life for us. All of them are encapsulated in Mary, and in the words delivered to her by the angel about her future. How can you function from this affection or desire for truth in life today?*

Notes:

12

13

“With God Nothing Will Be Impossible” Remaining Affirmative

December 13

Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible.” (Luke 1:34-37)

It is common in all worship of the Divine, that a person should first will, desire, and pray, and the Lord then answers, informs, and does; otherwise a person does not receive anything divine.
(*Apocalypse Revealed*, no. 376)

When the Lord was on earth He healed people, and He often did so according to their faith. The reason is that the first and primary thing of the church then to be established was to believe that the Lord is God Almighty, and that He has power to heal and save. This faith constitutes the beginning of life from God with a person. (*Apocalypse Explained* 815.3, *Secrets of Heaven* 10083.6)

Therefore, there are two attitudes; one of which leads to all stupidity and insanity, and the other to all intelligence and wisdom. The former attitude is to deny all things, or to say in the heart that we cannot believe them until we are convinced by what we can apprehend, or perceive by the senses. This is the attitude that leads to all stupidity and insanity, and is to be called the negative attitude.

The other attitude is to affirm the things which are of doctrine from the Lord's Word, or to think and believe within ourselves that they are true because the Lord has said them. This is the attitude that leads to all intelligence and wisdom, and is to be called the affirmative attitude.

This affirmative attitude must exist first when a person is being spiritually reborn. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 3923.2)

Reflection: *The Lord calls each one of us to remain affirmative to the things that He teaches. It's part of becoming truly human. Mary questioned the angel, but she willingly accepted what he told her. One of today's readings says that this kind of openness to the Lord's influence leads to "all intelligence and wisdom". In one sense, the Lord came on earth to teach people about new possibilities for their lives—to lead us toward wonderful experiences which can transform us as human beings. What are one or two parts of the Christmas story that you love, and that you feel particularly affirmative toward this year?*

Notes:

12

14

“Behold the Maidservant of the Lord” A Spirit of Cooperation

December 14

Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:38)

The new birth or creation of a person is effected by the Lord alone through charity (wanting what’s best for others and treating them well) and faith as the two means, with the person cooperating. (*True Christian Religion*, no. 576)

No union or partnership between two exists unless each party moves closer to the other. Every partnership is the result of two parties moving into a closer relationship with each other until both parties intend the same things. This leads to a similarity, harmony, unanimity, and agreement in every detail between the parties. If a given partnership is not the result of two things moving closer to each other in a mutual and reciprocal way, then a partnership develops that is only superficial rather than deep. In time, the partners in a superficial relationship drift away from each other, sometimes so far that they no longer recognise each other. (*True Christianity*, no. 99)

The Lord desires a state of humility in a person, and this for that person's sake. The reason for this is that when that state exists in a person, the Lord can flow in with heavenly goodness. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 5957)

Reflection: *A spirit of cooperation between two human beings (or within any group) brings people together. It allows for a sharing of ideas and experiences that benefits all. This is true especially when humility is present in the cooperation. Mary's willingness to cooperate with the Lord shows us this "truly human" quality—a willingness to work together with others in a humble and unassuming way. In what way(s) can such a spirit of cooperation enhance your experience of Christmas this year—with people you work with and people you love?*

Notes:

12

15

“The Babe Leaped in My Womb for Joy” Delight in the Goodness of Others

December 15

Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfilment of those things which were told her from the Lord.” (Luke 1:39-45)

Love consists in willing what one has to be another's, and in feeling the other's delight as delight within oneself. That is what it is to love. (*Divine Love and Wisdom*, no. 47)

One can confirm how great the delight of heaven must be from the fact that it is the delight of everyone in heaven to share his or her delights and blessings with others. (*Heaven and Hell*, no. 399)

The life of charity consists in thinking what is good in regard to others, wanting what is best for them, and feeling joy within ourselves that others as well are saved. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 2284)

The nature of the Lord's joy surpasses all understanding, because it is that of the Infinite. Infinite joy exists when goodness is received by those in heaven and in the Church. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 8672)

Reflection: *Think of a time when you felt joy over something good in the life of another person. Heavenly joy is like that. People in heaven experience delight when good things happen to others around them. They also experience delight over the goodness that exists within others; and they love to be agents of that goodness. One of today's readings indicates that the joy that we feel over goodness in others is a mirror of the infinite joy that the Lord feels when any one of us receives goodness from Him. What are one or two ways in which you might feel the delight of others as delight in yourself this Christmas season? What are one or two ways in which you might feel delight in the goodness within others around you?*

Notes:

12

16

“In Remembrance of His Mercy” Labouring to Help Those in Need

December 16

And Mary said: “My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour.
For He has regarded the lowly state of His
maidservant....

For He who is mighty has done great things for me,
And holy is His name.

And His mercy is on those who fear Him
From generation to generation.

He has shown strength with His arm;
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of
their hearts.

He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
And exalted the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,
And the rich He has sent away empty.

He has helped His servant Israel,

In remembrance of His mercy,

As He spoke to our fathers,

To Abraham and to his seed forever.”

(Lk 1:46-48, 49-55)

The Divine Providence does all things out of pure mercy, because the divine essence itself is pure love. This pure love is pure mercy because: 1. It functions with all people throughout the whole world, who are such that they can do nothing from themselves. 2. It functions equally with the wicked and unjust, and with the good and just. 3. It leads the former in hell and rescues them from it. 4. It perpetually strives with them there and fights for them against the evils of hell. 5. For that cause it came into the world, and endured temptations even to the last of them, which was the passion of the cross.

6. It acts continually with the unclean to make them clean, and with the unsound in mind to restore them to sanity. Thus it labours continually out of pure mercy. (*Divine Providence*, no. 337)

Reflection: *The readings for today describe the Lord's mercy as something that "labours continually" to help people who are in need. The readings also say that the Lord came on earth as an expression of mercy. In His actions on earth, and in His work of redemption and salvation, we see a quality of true humanness that we can strive for. We can become more deeply human, and more fully an image of the Lord, to the extent that we grow in compassion others who are in need, and to the extent that we "labor" to help them in ways that we can. What is one thing that you can do today to help someone who is in need—physically, emotionally, and/or spiritually?*

Notes:

12

17

“His Name if John” A Spirit of Obedience

December 17

Now Elizabeth’s full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbours and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her. So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, “No; he shall be called John.” But they said to her, “There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name.” So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, “His name is John.” So they all marvelled.

Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, “What kind of child will this be?” And the hand of the Lord was with him. (Luke 1:57-66)

For the outer part of a person to be brought into true order, it must become subordinate to the inner part; and it is subordinate when it obeys. To the extent that this happens, the outer person too is wise. This is what is meant when it is said that a person becomes a new creature. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 9708)

In the writings of Swedenborg, the "good of faith" is a term which denotes everything of the Church that has to do with life and service, inspired by teachings of the Church that compose its faith. In short, the "good of faith" is everything that has to do with wanting these things, willing them, and doing them in a spirit of obedience. The Church's truths of faith become forms of goodness through people's wanting, willing, and doing them. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 9230)

A spirit of obedience is the genuine good of faith and charity. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 7161.1)

Reflection: *Zacharias obeyed the Lord by naming his son "John" rather than Zacharias. Obedience requires us, at times, to submit our own will to the Lord's will. By submitting ourselves in this way, it may appear as though we're losing something of ourselves. But in reality, our effort and decision to obey are an exercise of our selfhood—the new selfhood that the Lord is building in us—little by little, day by day. This effort and decision involve a belief that the Lord's way is the wise way. They also involve a choice that we make to put that way into practice. These are some of the key ingredients in being born anew and becoming more truly human. What is one way that the Lord calls you to this kind of obedience today?*

Notes:

12

18

“That We Might Serve Him Without Fear” Steadfast Commitment to Spiritual Life

December 18

Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying:

“Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited and redeemed His people,
And has raised up a horn of salvation for us
In the house of His servant David,
As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets,...
That we should be saved from our enemies
And from the hand of all who hate us,
To perform the mercy promised to our fathers
And to remember His holy covenant,
The oath which He swore to our father Abraham:
To grant us that we,
Being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
Might serve Him without fear,
In holiness and righteousness before Him all the
days of our life.
And you, child, will be called the prophet of the
Highest;
For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare
His ways,...
To guide our feet into the way of peace.”
So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and
was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to
Israel. (Luke 1:67-76, 80)

Heaven is granted to people who know the path to it
and who follow that path. (*Divine Providence*, no. 60)

It must be grasped that there proceeds constantly from the Lord a divine aura of heavenly love towards all who embrace the teachings of His church, and who, just as children in the world obey their father and mother, obey Him, are devoted to Him, and seek food, that is, instruction from Him.
(True Christian Religion, no. 308)

Reflection: *To serve the Lord without fear.... To walk the path of salvation.... To remain committed to the Lord throughout life.... There's a spirit of determination within these goals. Zacharias seems to embody that quality of determination, having learned a valuable lesson from doubting the Lord's way. John himself would be the kind of person who remained strong in the Lord all his life. It is the Lord's constant effort to reach out to us and inspire us with this kind of commitment to spiritual life. Commitment to spiritual life is one of the most powerful outgrowths of our human abilities. It allows us to become "strong in spirit". What is one way in which you can show commitment to a spiritual life today?*

Notes:

12

19

“Then Joseph, Being a Just Man” Doing the Right Thing

December 19

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.” (Matthew 1:18-23)

It is a mark of a rational person to be thoroughly fair in what he or she thinks, and righteous in what he wills. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 3019)

The Lord's presence with a person is in goodness, and therefore in what is just and equitable, and further in what is honourable and becoming. These are the planes on which conscience, intelligence, and wisdom are founded in a person by the Lord. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 2915)

Integrity consists in a heartfelt desire for what is best for others in everyday life. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 4574)

The Lord is justice itself, and whatever He does, He does as the result of judgment itself. (*True Christian Religion*, no. 459.15)

Reflection: *Joseph has often been identified as a man of integrity. In his initial thought to “put Mary away secretly”, we see a goodness that wants what is honourable and good, together with compassion for the other person involved. This is a primary quality which welcomes the Lord’s guidance into our lives, and which receives the Lord in what we do. The Lord can foster “true humanness” in us to the extent that we strive for a willingness to do His will—with growing consistency—in different facets of our lives. What are one or two ways in which you could be like Joseph today—a person of integrity?*

Notes:

12 20

“Then Joseph Did as the Angel Commanded”

A Patient Spirit

December 20


Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him, and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus. (Matthew 1:24-25)

Goodness that is a product of love is heavenly, and thence mild, patient, and modest. (*Apocalypse Explained*, no. 427.9)

Rational goodness is of such a nature that it never fights, however it is assailed, because it is mild and gentle, patient and yielding; for its character is that of love and mercy. Yet although it does not fight, it conquers all and is safe of itself. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 1950.2)

Impatience is a bodily affection; and so far as we are subject to it time exists for us; but so far as we are not subject to it time does not exist. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 3827)

Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him. (Psalm 37:7)



Reflection: *Joseph waited patiently for his and Mary's love to develop in a heavenly way. What he may have wanted for himself was willingly put on hold for a time. Sometimes, our earthly wants or perceived needs can seem so important. What we desire for ourselves can take on such a sense of urgency that it leads to impatience and frustration in our dealings with others. Opposite to that is a willingness to see that certain good things may, for a time, be more important than our immediate desires. This is one of the spiritual qualities that the Lord would have us develop—one in which our God-given spirit is in charge of our bodies, and not the reverse. What is one pressing want that you personally experience, which might usefully be put on hold for a time—for the sake of something better?*

Notes:

12

21

“And She Brought Forth Her Firstborn Son”

New Beginnings:

A “Constant” in Truly Human Life

December 21

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. This census first took place while Quirinius was governing Syria. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:1-7)

When the life of charity (goodwill and good action) and faith is breathed into a person by the Lord, the person is made alive. He or she becomes spiritual and heavenly, and is called a “new creature” from having been created anew. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 780)

The Lord's foresight and providence are present within the tiniest details of a person's life. It is in details so tiny that it is impossible to comprehend even one in many millions of them. For every smallest fraction of a moment of a person's life entails a chain of consequences extending into eternity. Indeed every moment is like a new beginning to those that follow. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 3854)

Reflection: *Many parents, when they witness the birth of their first child, sense that their lives will never be the same again. There are new states of mind and life to be experienced, as they change their patterns of living to incorporate a new life into the mix. Not only that, but their new little child goes through many new states as well, most of which expand the parents' worlds and bring great delight. Consider the new states of mind and life that were ushered into the world by means of the Lord's coming on earth. Not only did He change the dominant picture that people had of Him, but He also ushered in a new era of teaching, spiritual understanding, and love. One insight that is born of these things is that human life is all about change and growth through an ongoing spiritual process; and the Lord Himself is in charge of it all. What is the next step that you would like to take, or that the Lord might like you to take, in this ongoing process of growth and development?*

Notes:

12

22

“A Multitude of the Heavenly Host” Celebrating the Lord’s Goodness

December 22

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward all!” (Luke 2:8-14)

The words of Scripture, “praising God” mean the voice of joy and gladness in confessions and worship of God. (*Apocalypse Explained*, no. 1210.1)

In their outward form angels are manifestations of heavenly love and goodwill. That is the truly human form. The reason why angels have a human form is that the Divine in heaven is the Lord, and those who receive divine truth within goodness from Him are images of Him. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 9503)

[There are those who believe] that heavenly joy consists in simply praising and blessing the Lord, without performing good deeds from a spirit of goodwill; and that this constitutes an active life. However, praising and blessing the Lord *does not constitute* an active life, but is an *outgrowth* of that life. For the Lord has no need of any praises. Indeed, He wants people to perform good deeds born of goodwill. People receive happiness in accordance with these things. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 456, emphasis added)

Reflection: *The angels were filled with joy at the Lord's birth. This happened, in part, because they knew what His birth signalled for the human race. It meant that people would be able to know the Lord in a new way—who He is, what He wants of us, and how we can follow Him to heaven. It meant that people would be able to experience greater happiness in their lives than ever before. The Lord would teach them new and deeper truths that could help make it happen. One of today's readings says that angels are "truly human" because they are embodiments of what the Lord most deeply wants and cares about—love and goodwill toward others. Within all of these things, the Lord invites us to care about and celebrate His work in human lives—in our lives and the lives of others. What are some of the things you celebrate most this season?*

Notes:

12

23

“Let Us Now Go to Bethlehem”

The Spirit of Discovery

December 23


So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, “Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.” And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child. And all those who heard it marvelled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. (Lk 2:15-20)

To be affected by truths is to wish to know them from affection, and when a person discovers them, to drink them in from the joy of that affection. (*Divine Love and Wisdom*, no. 404)

The person who is in charity examines and discovers by means of truth what ought to be loved. (*Doctrine of Faith*, no. 21)

The spirit is not imbued with truths except as it desires to know truth wherever it exists in the Lord’s Word, and as it takes delight in seeing and perceiving it. This affection is the spiritual affection for truth. (*Apocalypse Explained*, no. 190)

In proportion as anyone loves what is true, in the same proportion he or she desires to know it, and in the same proportion he is affected at heart when he finds it. No one else comes into wisdom. (*Doctrine of Life*, no. 89)



Reflection: *Today's readings describe the desire to know and the spirit of discovery. The shepherds were taught something new: The Saviour of the world had been born on earth. Their immediate journey to Bethlehem pictures the activity that goes on in our hearts and minds when we've been touched by some element of truth. That truth is something precious to us, something that resonates with us, and something that we realise is worth pursuing. This desire and even hunger to know is what allows the Lord to introduce Himself to us in ever new ways, and to show us how we can grow as human beings. With just two days to go until Christmas, what is one truth that you've been pursuing this year—with all the sincerity and earnestness of the shepherds? How has that truth been helping you discover (or rediscover) the Lord? How has it been helping you become more truly human?*

Notes:

12

24

“Gold, Frankincense, and Myrrh”

A Desire to Give

December 24

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.”...When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:1-2, 9-11)

In ancient times gifts were presented to kings when people went to them. So too, the wise men from the east brought gifts to the Lord just born. These outward gifts symbolised internal or spiritual gifts, namely, such as go forth from the heart. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 4262.3, *Apocalypse Explained*, no. 661)

In the Lord’s Word, by “gifts” are meant the kinds of things that are offered to the Lord by a person from the heart, and which are accepted by Him. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 9293.1)

In the heavens there is a sharing of all with each and of each with all. Such sharing goes forth from the two loves of heaven, which are love of the Lord and love of the neighbour. Love of the Lord is such because the Lord's love is a love of sharing everything it has with all, since it wills the happiness of all. There is a similar love in everyone of those who love the Lord, because the Lord is in them. From this comes the mutual sharing of the delights of angels with one another. (*Heaven and Hell*, no. 399)

Reflection: *One of the most enduring images of Christmas is that of the wise men presenting gifts to the infant Lord. This part of the story shows us that giving of ourselves to others—sharing with them the gifts and talents that we've been given—is part of being truly human. This desire to give of ourselves to others comes from the Lord, who strives to share everything that He has with everyone. What is one way in which you can give of yourself to others today—the day before Christmas?*

Notes:

12

25

“Now You Are Letting Your Servant Depart in Peace”

Peace: A Gift to Humankind

December 25

Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.... And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; For my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." (Luke 2:22, 25-32)

Peace is like dawn on the earth, which gladdens minds with universal delight. Peace has in it confidence in the Lord, that He directs all things, and provides all things, and that He leads to a good end. When a person is in this faith, he or she is in peace, for he then fears nothing, and no anxiety about things to come disquiets him. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 8455)

Peace in the heavens is the divine nature intimately affecting everything good there with blessedness. This peace is perceived by the angels through a heartfelt delight when they are involved in the goodness of their life, a pleasure when they hear something true that is in accord with their goodness, and a gladness of mind when they perceive the union of the two. It flows into all the actions and thoughts of their life and makes itself known as joy. (*Heaven and Hell*, nos. 286, 288)

The Lord is Peace itself. (*Secrets of Heaven*, no. 1726)

Reflection: *One of the beautiful things about Christmas Eve and Christmas Day is the sense of peace that they can bring. All of the busyness of the Christmas season is past, and it's now time to enjoy "the moment"—the experience of Christmas itself. As we take in moments of Christmastime peace, they can remind us of the larger goal of ongoing peace that the Lord holds out to all of us. By means of His birth on earth, through all that He did for us, and by means of all that He continues to do, He strives to give us a sense of perfect peace. He is the infinite God of heaven and earth—the One who "directs all things, provides all things, and leads to an end that is good". The more we cooperate with Him, the more we can experience a profound sense of inner peace, and the more we can recognise it as one of His greatest gifts to humankind. What are one or two moments of peace that you have experienced this Christmas season?*

Notes:

12

26

“And the Child Grew”

A Desire to Become Truly Human

December 26

And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him. (Luke 2:40)

[In order to come on earth] God had to be conceived, carried in the womb, born, brought up, and learn matters of knowledge one by one; and by their means He had to be brought into a state of intelligence and wisdom. Therefore, in His humanity He was a child like any other child, a boy like any other boy, and so on, the only difference being that He achieved that progress more quickly, fully, and perfectly than others. Divine order prescribes that we should prepare ourselves to receive God; and as we prepare ourselves, so God enters into us as into His dwelling and home. (*True Christian Religion*, no. 89)

Reflection: *This series of readings has been gathered around the theme of becoming truly human. The Lord was born on this earth as a divinely human God. Not only did He show forth divine qualities of mercy and love in human form, but He also showed how we ourselves can become more truly human—through the process of spiritual rebirth or regeneration. In fact, He Himself went through the very same process of spiritual transformation—though He did so in a divinely perfect way. In knowing this, we come to realise that true humanness consists in gentle strength, innocence, blamelessness, holy fear, confidence in the Lord, a desire to be useful, a desire to learn, an affirmative spirit, the spirit of cooperation, mercy, obedience, steadfast commitment, joy in the goodness of others, integrity, patience, a desire to give of ourselves to others, a desire to grow, and more. The Lord has shown us what true humanness looks like, and He is right here, right now, leading you in a spiritual journey of growth and promise. This is just one of the things that the story of Christmas is all about. What is one way in which you would like to carry the story of Christmas into the new year—as you continue on the pathway of becoming more truly human?*

Notes:

We hope that you enjoy this year's Christmas Readings and that they add a new depth to the coming season for you. We also hope that you are able to join us for some of the many activities our two societies have planned for December.

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We must acknowledge the good work of our friend and colleague, Rev. Mark Pendleton, Associate Pastor of the Glenview New Church. For many years Mark has been preparing Christmas readings and making them available across the New Church. This pamphlet is his work with only minor 'tweaking' to permit it to fit our formats in Australia.