

Advent

2021

A New World



PROCLADE
FUNDACIÓN
ONG PROMOVIDA POR LOS MISIONEROS CLARETIANOS



CMF SANTIAGO

PRESENTATION

Advent is a mixture of hope and surprise. Hope for a new world that humanity is waiting for and surprise at God's response to the yearnings of his children. Who would have expected that God's response would be the supportive presence of God himself in our midst? Our Father planned everything because he wants to convince us that a world of brothers and sisters is possible and that He will always be the driving force behind it.

The needs and desires of human beings are expressed in the pleas and promises of the Old Testament prophets. But we also find them in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable (Human) Development. Therefore, the present meditations for Advent will mix the biblical texts of the Advent liturgy with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights document. The desired New Humanity is expressed in both texts.

The texts of Advent present us with characters who have much in common: they want a new world, they trust in God, they are open to doing God's will, and they know that they are God's messengers. These protagonists of Advent prepare the hearts of men for the fulfillment of God's promises, for the birth of God himself among us. The texts that tell us their story and their experiences want to move us to trust in God, fill us with hope for the fulfillment of the promises and create the attitudes that will make the new world possible. I have added the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the biblical texts, because I believe that their authors trusted in the possibilities of the human being and called us to a creative commitment to the New Kingdom.

We could include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the group of messages that yearns for and prepare the way for the coming of the Kingdom of God. There have been many utopias born from the heart of man that have sought to reach heaven or, in other words, to make possible a new world of fraternity on earth. Although this desire was placed in the human heart by God himself, believers know that it is not possible to build a fraternal world without putting God at the center of our efforts. Even the realization of Human Rights, which have deep universal and Christian roots, is not possible without God. This is one of our essential contributions to the groups, movements, and people who want to implement Human Rights.

Advent is a time to feel God's call to trust Him in the building of this new world. But, as much as God calls, it is necessary to answer the call. To the characters presented to us in the Bible as "called by God," especially Mary, I wanted to add another woman, Eleanor Roosevelt, who was the president of the commission that drafted the Declaration of Human Rights. Jesus was "a man like us" and Mary was "one of us". By commemorating Eleanor Roosevelt and her work, I want to call attention to the dedication of ordinary people like us, who are creating a new world by their daily work.



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The photographs are all taken in places where we the Claretian Missionaries work. They are people who are humbly trying to make this world a more fraternal place.

I ask all of us to accept God's call to build, with him, a New World. The Father decided that it is necessary our will and collaboration, in freedom, to create the Fraternity of the children of God. How could we refuse the call of God that he gives us by being born, as one of us, in Bethlehem of Judea?

Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmf



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmf



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Bible reading: *Mark 13:33-37*

³³ "Take heed and watch, for you do not know when the time will come.

³⁴ Just as a man who is absent leaves his house, and gives his servants charge, to each his work, and orders the porter to watch;

³⁵ Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, whether at even, or at midnight, or cockcrow, or early in the morning.

³⁶ Lest he comes suddenly and finds you asleep.

³⁷ What I say to you I say to all: Watch!"

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood. (Art.1)

Comment:

Advent is a liturgical time of preparation to welcome Jesus, who was born in human time and history. It is a time in which, every year, God asks us to deepen our understanding of the meaning of his incarnation. The Word became man and dwelt among us to let us know that "God is always with us" and ask us to continue his Mission of closeness and solidarity with humanity. This call is made to us today, in the Gospel, with a tone of urgency.

Two women will guide our way in these Advent reflections: Mary of Nazareth and Eleanor Roosevelt. Mary, who pondered everything, words, and deeds of life in her heart, invites us to listen to the Word and interpret the signs of the times. Eleanor, coordinator of the commission that drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1949), will present to us humanity's desires that cry out for things to be different.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, omt



Bible reading: *Matthew 4:18-22*

¹⁸ As he walked by the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen,

¹⁹ And he said to them, "Come with me, and I will make you fishers of men."

²⁰ And they immediately, leaving their nets, followed him.

²¹ And walking ahead, he saw two other brothers, James Zebedee's brother and his brother John, who were in the boat with their father Zebedee mending their nets; and he called them.

²² And they immediately left the boat and their father and followed him.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty. (Art. 2)

Comment:

Jesus calls us personally in the midst of our life; he accepts who we are and how we are, for he knows us more than we know ourselves. He calls us by name to follow him so that we may continue his Mission. It is a call that transcends races, peoples, languages, and nations, because it is addressed to the heart of every human being—a universal call to form the family of God's children.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, oml



Bible reading: *Luke 10:21-22*

²¹ At that moment, Jesus was filled with joy in the Holy Spirit and said, "I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for you have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and revealed them to little ones. Yes, Father, for such has been your good pleasure.

²² All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows who the Son is but the Father; and who the Father is but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person. (Art. 3)

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms. (Art. 4)

Comment:

For a long time, our world has tended to define important people as those who have fame, power, or money, the three temptations of Jesus. Jesus changes the characteristics of "important people". For him, the most important are "the little ones." Thus, for God the Father, all his children are important, and he wants a life of freedom for all of us. Freedom is not only of movement but implies the unfolding of all the capacities and personal riches that the Father has given us.



Photo: Miguel Angel Velasco, oml

Bible reading: *Matthew 15:33-37*

³³ The disciples say to him, "How can we do in a desert with bread enough to satisfy so great a multitude?"

³⁴ Jesus said to them, "How many loaves do you have?" They said, "Seven, and a few small fish."

³⁵ He commanded the people to make themselves comfortable on the ground.

³⁶ Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds.

³⁷ They all ate and were satisfied, and from the leftover pieces, they took up seven baskets full.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. (Art. 5)

Every human being has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law. (Art. 6)

Comment:

We are disciples of Jesus. He presents the world to us as it is. It is a world in which we can discover people and achievements that are clear signs of love, but we can also find enormous tears, injustice, pain, and death. Sometimes it is challenging to keep our gaze and contemplate this world that God our Father does not want as it is: many of His children suffer because of his other children. Because Jesus does not want the world to remain like this, he asks us, just as he asked his disciples, to "feed the multitude". He knows our weaknesses but also all our greatness. He insists on his call because he also assures us that he will always be at our side.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi



Bible reading: *Matthew 7:21, 24-25*

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on a rock:

²⁵ the rain fell, the floods came, the winds blew, and beat against that house; but it did not fall, because it was founded on rock.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

All are equal before the law and are entitled without distinction to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination. (Art. 7)

Comment:

"All are equal before the law," says Article 7 of the Human Rights. Jesus gives us a reason for equality, which is not in the UN Declaration and which asks us to go far beyond equality before the law: we are brothers and sisters and children of the same God. Today's Gospel invites us to concretize this affirmation so that it does not remain a mere principle. The Gospel asks us to put it into practice. Let us remember - it is a call to put it into practice with all the 7.4 billion people in the world, without leaving one out. The New Humanity is being built on rock.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi



Bible reading: *Matthew 9:27-31*

- ²⁷ As Jesus was going away from there, as he passed by, two blind men followed him, crying out, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"
- ²⁸ And when he came home, the blind men came to him, and Jesus says to them, "Do you believe that I can do this?" They say to him, "Yes, Lord."
- ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes, saying, "Let it be done to you according to your faith."
- ³⁰ And their eyes were opened. Jesus sternly commanded them, "See that no one knows!"
- ³¹ But they, as soon as they went out, spread his fame throughout that whole district.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law. (Art. 8)

Comment:

Blindness, in the Gospels, is not simply a physical defect. The evangelists relate physical blindness to dramatic blindness: the blindness of the soul unable to see as God himself sees the world. Jesus wants to give us all the gift of seeing "as God the Father sees his creation." Many times, the temptations of Jesus (power, possessions, fame) are present in our lives. These temptations so blur our way of looking at the world that, in the end, any resemblance to "God's way of looking at the world" is purely coincidental. We are all children of God.



Photo: Miguel Angel Velasco, cmi

Bible reading: *Matthew 9:35-38*

³⁵ Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and every sickness.

³⁶ And when he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

³⁷ Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.

³⁸ Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

¹ And he called his twelve disciples to him, and gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

No one may be arbitrarily detained, imprisoned, or exiled. (Art. 9)

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him (Art. 10).

Comment:

"He gave them the power to cure all diseases." What are the diseases that humanity has today? Jesus formed a group of disciples, taught them, lived with them, and sent them to heal diseases. The gospel text makes mention of a vexed and discouraged people to whom Jesus sends his disciples. As a community of disciples of Jesus, we are called by Him to this Mission: to cure all the diseases that make the children of God feel humiliated and dejected.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi



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Bible reading: *Isaiah 40:1-5*

¹ Comfort, comfort my people, says your God.

² Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, and tell her loudly that she has already fulfilled her service, she has already satisfied for her guilt, for she has received from the hand of the LORD double punishment for all her sins.

³ A voice cries out, "Make a way for the LORD in the wilderness, make a straight highway in the desert for our God.

⁴ Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; let the rugged be made level, and the heathen plain.

⁵ The glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and every creature shall see it together. For the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial at which he has had all the guarantees necessary for his defence. (Art. 11.1)

Comment:

Perhaps, in the place where we live, we have the right referred to in Art. 11 well safeguarded, or maybe not. In reality, the vast majority of humanity does not live in places where Article 11.1 applies. The same could be said of many other articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The first reading of the Second Sunday of Advent is addressed to the many people in the world who live in places where neither human rights nor other rights are recognized. The voice of God resonates in the prophet Isaiah: Comfort my people, says the Lord, those people who feel annoyed and discouraged. God promises to help them, but he asks for help from the disciples of his son Jesus so that his promise becomes a reality.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi

Bible reading: *Isaiah 35:1-3*

¹ Let the wilderness and the dry land rejoice, let the steppe rejoice and let it blossom as a flower;

² Let it burst into blossom and rejoice until it shouts for joy. The glory of Lebanon is given to it, the splendor of Carmel and Sharon. The glory of the LORD shall be seen, the splendor of our God.

³ Strengthen the weak hands, strengthen the feeble knees.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home, or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honor or reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks. (Art. 12)

Comment:

The second week of Advent, which we began yesterday, is full of hope and joy. Amid a disastrous and painful situation in Israel, Isaiah does not hesitate to proclaim God's call to happiness for the fulfillment of the promises. Weak hands, wavering knees, lame, blind, dumb; Isaiah announces a new world and the guarantor of this world is God. Isaiah's and Jesus' call to joy involves human beings in all their dimensions. A new world will be born in which all of us will feel that we are children of God and no one will be left aside. God himself announces the coming of a world in which "no one will be left behind."



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi



Bible reading: *Luke 1:30-37*

- ³⁰ The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God;
³¹ you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.
³² He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of his Father David;
³³ he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."
³⁴ Mary answered the angel, "How shall this be, since I know not a man?"
³⁵ The angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore he who is to be born will be holy and will be called the Son of God.
³⁶ See, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month of her who was called barren,
³⁷ for nothing is impossible with God."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the territory of a State. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country. (Art. 13)

Comment:

On Tuesday of the second week of Advent, we are introduced to the great female protagonist of Advent: Mary, who receives the Word of God, a word that is her unexpected vocation to participate in God's plans. Mary receives the Word of God, a word that is her unexpected vocation to participate in God's programs. How is it possible that she, a simple woman of Israel, could be called to be the mother of the Messiah? Each of us, like Mary, receives the "angel's visit" many times in our lives. Just as Mary did, we should be amazed and incredulous that God asks us to help him build human fraternity; but God knows what he is doing. Like Mary, each one of us is called to freely respond to God.

Concerning Article 13 of the Declaration of Human Rights, I am reminded of the image of Mary and Joseph leaving their town and searching unsuccessfully for a lodge in Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph were, in their time, migrants who were not given accommodation.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi

Bible reading: *Matthew 11:28-30*

²⁸ "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you will find rest for your souls.

³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution. This right may not be invoked in the case of prosecutions genuinely arising from non-political crimes or from acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. (Art. 14)

Comment:

According to UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency), by the end of 2020, the number of people displaced by persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations will reach 82.4 million. It is undoubtedly challenging to reconcile the right of these people to be welcomed with the capacity of the countries called to receive them. But the question that Jesus asks us today is: are you doing what is possible to welcome these people? Are we doing what is possible so that those who are tired and burdened hear the words of Jesus in words that we address to them in His name?

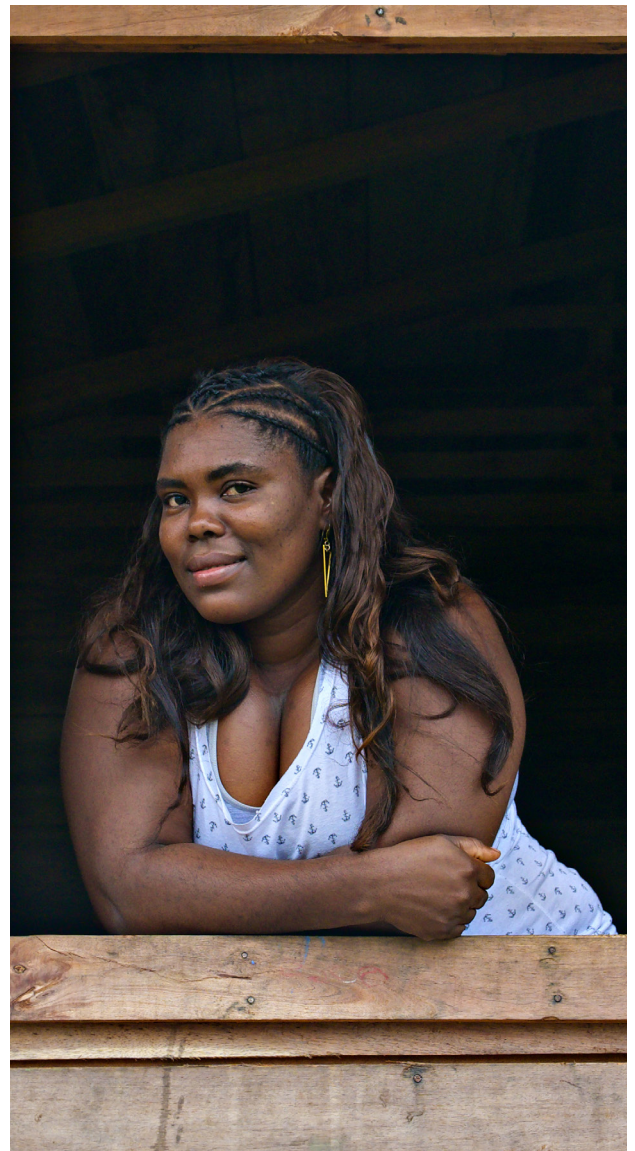


Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmf



Bible reading: *Isaiah 41:13-14; 17-18*

¹³ For I, the LORD your God, hold you by the right hand. It is I who say to you, "Fear not, I will help you."

¹⁴ Fear not, O worm of Jacob, O people of Israel: I will help you, says the LORD, and your redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

¹⁷ The meek and the poor seek water, but there is none. Their tongues are parched with thirst. I, the LORD, will answer them, I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them.

¹⁸ I will open streams in the glades and springs in the midst of the ravines. I will turn the wilderness into ponds, and the dry land into a fountain of waters.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to a nationality. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality or of the right to change his nationality. (Art. 15)

Comment:

The prophet Isaiah continues proclaiming promises to Israel, but there are promises of fulfillment about a new world on this occasion. Again, the examples are taken from life, from the lives of those thirsty, from the most vulnerable of the people. In God's name, Isaiah almost calls them blessed; God will bless them. As it happens with the Beatitudes, we have to understand that much of the fulfillment of the promises depend on our positive response to God's call. We are called to comfort, wipe away tears, feed, and seek justice for all.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi

Bible reading: *Matthew 11:16-19*

¹⁶ "But to whom shall I compare this generation? It is like the little children who sit in the market-places and cry out to one another, saying:

¹⁷ "We have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have sung to you dirges, and you have not mourned."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution. Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State. (Art. 16)

Comment:

Article 16 of the Declaration of Human Rights refers to marriage and the family. It expresses the right to the free choice of spouse and equality between them. The creation of a family is a right in any religion, nation, or race, and its existence is recognized as a natural and fundamental element of society to be protected by the State. I repeat the ideas already expressed in article 16 because I believe that the family is the essential sphere for transmitting social and religious values. The future of humanity and the Church is at stake in the attention to and care of the family.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, oml

Bible reading: *Isaiah 2:14-15*

¹⁴Shout for joy and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for behold, I come to dwell within you, says the LORD.
¹⁵Many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day: they shall be one people to me, and I will dwell in the midst of you. So shall you know that the LORD Sebaoth has sent me to you.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to property, individually and collectively. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property. (Art. 17)

Comment:

Isaiah does not call Israel alone to the joy of God's fulfilled promises. He announces that one of the signs of the fulfillment of those promises is that all nations will be called by God to celebrate. God is not thinking only of Israel; he is thinking of all humanity. Isaiah's message is a "Universal Declaration of Joy" for all humanity.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmf

Bible reading: *1 Thessalonians 5:16-24*

¹⁶ Rejoice always.

¹⁷ Pray constantly.

¹⁸ In everything give thanks, for this is what God in Christ Jesus wants from you.

¹⁹ Do not quench the Spirit;

²⁰ Do not despise the prophecies;

²¹ Test all things, and hold fast that which is good.

²² Abstain from every kind of evil.

²³ May he, the God of peace, sanctify you wholly, and may your whole being, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

²⁴ Faithful is he who calls you, and it is he who will do it.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion: this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching

Comment:

Article 18 of the Declaration of Human Rights clearly expresses the freedom to have, live and freely express one's faith both individually and collectively. The text of Thessalonians tells us how to live this faith: joy, thanksgiving, refraining from evil and keeping all good things from outside and inside the Church. With this attitude, St. Paul tells us, we will find peace. In reality, the community of Jesus' disciples is called to live in it the fulfillment of the promises announced by Isaiah. God is born on earth because he wants to be born in each one of us; the Spirit of the Risen One makes us live the fulfillment of the promises in us and for others. All this so that the world may believe that a better world is possible because God wants it.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi



Bible reading: *Psalm 25:4-9*

⁴ Show me your ways, O LORD, teach me your paths.

⁵ Guide me in your truth, teach me, for you are the God of my salvation. I wait for you all day long,

⁶ Remember, O LORD, thy tenderness and thy lovingkindness, which are from everlasting.

⁷ Remember not the sins of my youth, but according to thy lovingkindness remember me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

⁸ Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he shows sinners the way;

⁹ He leadeth the meek in righteousness, and teacheth the poor his way.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. (Art. 19)

Comment:

I imagine Mary praying to God Yahweh with this same Psalm 25, asking him to show her his ways and to have mercy on her faults; asking him to show his mercy, his love and his tenderness. Mary the prayerful one, the one who received the angel's visit to tell her of God's plans for her. If you can imagine, perhaps Mary was praying with this psalm when she was surprised by the angel's invitation to be the mother of the Messiah. So much for imagination. But what is not imagination is our tendency to think that we are worth much less than God thinks we are. Thus, when we truly ask God to show us his ways, his answer always opens up immense and unsuspected horizons.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmt



Bible reading: *Matthew 21:28-32*

²⁸ "But what do you think? A man had two sons. Coming to the first, he said to him, "Son, go work in the vineyard today."

²⁹ And he answered, "I will not," but afterward he repented and went.

³⁰ And coming to the second, he said the same thing to him. And he answered, "I go, Lord," and did not go.

³¹ Which of the two did the will of the Father?" - "The first" - they say to him. Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the harlots come into the kingdom of God before you."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. No one may be compelled to belong to an association. (Art. 20)

Comment:

The parable presents us with two sons, the first said he was not going to the vineyard, but he went; the second said he was going to the vineyard, but in the end, he did not go. I am missing a son, or better, a daughter, perhaps before the two sons who, after the surprise of the invitation to work in the vineyard, asked with some surprise, about what they proposed to do. This daughter was called Mary. Mary did not make God listen to a YES that she would later transform into a NO or a NO that, with time, would transform into a YES. Mary always said YES. Mary was the daughter of that man, the one who does not appear in the parable, who asked sincerely about the meaning of the invitation, but who always said YES to the work in the vineyard. What kind of son is each of us?



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi



Bible reading: *Isaiah 45:6-8*

⁶That it may be known from the rising sun to the setting sun that all is nothing besides me. I am the LORD, no other;

⁷I create light and I create darkness, I create happiness and I create misfortune, I am the LORD who does all these things.

⁸Distill, O heavens, like dew from on high; pour out victory, O clouds. Let the earth open and bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. I, the LORD, have created it.

He did not create it chaotic, but fashioned it to be inhabited: "I am the LORD, there is no other.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country. The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures. (Art. 21)

Comment:

Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights speaks to us of humanity. We all have the right to participate in the organizations of our country and our world. These are legal terms, somewhat harsh in expression; to bring justice first and then fraternity into the day-to-day life of the organizations is not easy. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a less inspiring document for us than the Gospel, but it puts, in juridical and human terms, many values that tell us that the Good News of the Gospel can permeate the social order of our world. If we know how to look at humanity with God's eyes, we will find many signs of the presence of God's Spirit in history. The Declaration of Human Rights is very much a "sign of God.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi



Bible reading: *Psalm 72:3-4, 7-8, 17*

³ Let the mountains bring peace to the people and righteousness to the hills.

⁴ He will bring justice to the lowly of the people, he will save the children of the poor, and crush the oppressor.

⁷ In his days righteousness shall flourish, and peace shall increase until the moon be no more;

⁸ He shall have dominion from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth.

¹⁷ May his name be blessed forever, may it last as long as the sun; in him may all the families of the earth be blessed, may all the nations call him blessed.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality. (Art. 22)

Comment:

The third week of Advent invites us to be attentive to the imminent coming of the New World. Peace and justice will sweep through the whole world. Justice will flourish, and peace will flourish until the moon is no more. Psalm 72 presents us with a process of transformation of the world, in peace and justice. Psalm 72 presents us with a process of transformation of the world, in peace and justice. Like nature itself in blossoming and bearing fruit, or in the flowing of the waters of the rivers, little by little, the "new world" will fill everything. The third week of Advent puts us on alert: all this is about to begin. The birth of Jesus happened more than two thousand years ago and, since then, the Good News that came to us in Jesus has transformed many things and has had a decisive influence on the birth of new flowers of peace and justice such as the Declaration of Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi

Bible reading: *Jeremiah 23:5-8*

⁵ Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will raise for David a legitimate offspring; he shall reign as a wise king, he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶ In his days Judah shall be saved, Israel shall dwell securely. And they shall call him by this name, "The-Lord-our-righteousness." ⁷ Therefore, behold, the days are coming-the oracle of the Lord-when it shall not be said, "As the Lord lives, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt," ⁸ but it shall be said, "As the Lord lives, who brought the race of Israel out of the land of the North and out of the countries whither he drove them, and brought them to dwell in his fields."

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests. (Art. 23)

Comment:

Article 23 talks about something as every day as adequate and dignified work. Again, this may not be a particular problem for many, but if we look at our world, it is a problem for most people. The COVID-19 pandemic has further increased the number of unemployed or people who are exploited through indecent and even inhumane work. The celebration of the birth of Jesus this Christmas, must be a moment in which we reactivate our commitment to creating a more just and peaceful world. The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem marked the fulfillment of God's promises to his people Israel; the risen Jesus gives us the Spirit and asks us to continue his work. This work implies the call to all of us, his disciples, to continue the creative work of the Family of the Sons of God. Let us celebrate that Jesus was born more than 2000 years ago and that we are the laborers in the vineyard.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi



Bible reading: *Psalm 71:4-6, 16-17*

⁴ O my God, deliver me from the hand of the wicked, from the clutches of the wicked and the violent!

⁵ For you are my hope, O Lord, O LORD, my confidence from my youth.

⁶ In you I have had my support from the womb, you my portion from my mother's womb; in you without ceasing my praise!

¹⁶ And I will come to the exploits of the LORD, I will remember your righteousness, yours alone.

¹⁷ O God, from my youth thou hast taught me, and I have declared thy wondrous works unto this day.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to rest, to the enjoyment of leisure time, to a reasonable limitation of the duration of work and to periodic vacations with pay. (Art. 24)

Comment:

Psalm 71 brings us the experience of the prophet, the believer, the disciple of Jesus. As in our own life, even during this time of Advent, we will have gone through different moods: from listening to the call to the enthusiasm to make it a reality, from doubt about our abilities to pessimistic realism. But God never stops calling workers to his vineyard. What God wants to accomplish with humanity is very important, and he needs workers at all times. As the psalmist does, let us recognize the great things that the Lord has accomplished in us; let us thank him because he does not let us fall into discouragement. What God is "up to" is very too vital to stop insisting on his call to each one of us. Are we still sick with self-interested deafness?



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi



Bible reading: *Luke 1:26-29*

²⁶ In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee, called Nazareth,
²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

²⁸ And he went in and said to her, "Rejoice, full of grace, the Lord is with you."

²⁹ And she was troubled at these words, and reasoned what that greeting might mean.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing, medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, are entitled to equal social protection. (Art. 25)

Comment:

The fourth Sunday of Advent opens the week of the Nativity. The Gospel for today could not be otherwise: the Annunciation. The Gospel reminds us of the moment when Mary accepted the vocation that God offered her. We are not used to comparing Mary's "Yes" with the "Yes" that God proposes to each one of us. It seems that Mary's vocation has nothing to do with each one of ours! Even stranger is to refer to politicians as people who accept their positions as a service to the people. Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) was one of the most decisive persons in the approval of the Declaration of Human Rights as President of the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations. She was First Lady of the United States of America from 1933 to 1945. To her belong these words spoken on the day of the adoption of the Declaration: "We stand today on the threshold of a great event both in the life of the United Nations and in the life of mankind." This Declaration may well become the international Magna Carta for all people everywhere. All of us, in whatever work we are doing, should feel God's vocational call to collaborate in building his family of children in the world.



Photo: Archives de l'ONU



Bible reading: *Zephaniah 3:16-18*

¹⁶ In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, "Do not be afraid, O Zion, let not your hands be dismayed!

¹⁷ The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty savior! He exults with joy for you, he renews you by his love; he dances for you with shouts of joy,

¹⁸ as on feast days. I will remove from your side the disgrace, the reproach that weighs on you.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least as regards elementary and fundamental instruction. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional instruction shall be generalized; access to higher education shall be equal for all, on the basis of merit. Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; it shall promote understanding, tolerance, and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups; and it shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Parents shall have a preferential right to choose the type of education to be given to their children. (Art. 26)

Comment:

We are already very close to the celebration of Christmas. We have received many texts and messages in the readings of this Advent. They are the values and attitudes of the kingdom of God, which we have made present in our daily reflection. Gospel values intermingle with the values and rights of the Universal Declaration. Today, Article 26 of the Declaration speaks to us of the right to education: education "in values." An education based on the values contained in the Declaration, and for us also, based on Christian values.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmi



Bible reading: "Raise the helpless from the dust." / Samuel 2:1, 4-8

⁴The bow of the strong is broken, the tottering ones gird themselves with strength.

⁵The full are hired for bread, the hungry forsake their labor. The barren brings forth seven times, she of many children withers.

⁶The LORD giveth death and life, he bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up again.

⁷The LORD enriches and spoils, he brings down and exalts.

⁸He raises up the lowly from the dust, he lifts up the poor from the dunghill, to make him sit with the nobles, and to give him a glorious throne as an inheritance; for the pillars of the earth are the LORD'S, and upon them he has set the whole world.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author. (Art. 27)

Comment:

Article 27 of the Universal Declaration opens the way to a definition of human rights that goes far beyond the obvious right to life. The authors of the Declaration had in mind, as a subject of rights, the integral human being. Speaking of the human being in these terms implies the development of their capacities and attention to their cultural and religious needs. The Declaration clearly reflects the right of each of us to develop our capacities in freedom, including, of course, our spiritual capacities. We find courage in God to believe that this fraternal world is possible for everyone and that working for its realization is not a useless task.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmt



Bible reading: *Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24*

¹ Behold, I will send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall immediately come to his temple; and the Angel of the covenant, whom ye desire, behold, he cometh, saith the LORD Sebaoth.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized. (Art.28)

Comment:

The prophet Malachi speaks of the messenger who will pave the way for the coming of the Lord. The Advent season is filled with people who announce or prepare the coming of Jesus. They are not Jesus, they are not God, but they prepare the way; they are in tune with the one who is to come. Of course, documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Human Development are not the Gospel, but they are, to a large extent, in tune with it. They are spaces for dialogue in which there is room for Christians of all confessions, members of other religions and, as Vatican II said, for people of good will. These documents are the frame of reference with which humanity has equipped itself in order to grow in peace. Our task as Christians is to contribute the deepest values of the Gospel to this global project. Jesus did not come neither to destroy the Law nor to erase these documents from the map, but to complete what is lacking in them. That must be our task too.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, cmf



Bible reading: *Luke 1:67-75*

⁶⁷ And Zechariah his Father was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he prophesied, saying:
⁶⁸ "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people.
⁶⁹ and has raised for us a saving power in the house of David, his servant,
⁷⁰ as he promised of old by the mouth of his holy prophets,
⁷¹ that he would save us from our enemies and from the hands of all those who hated us
⁷² by showing mercy to our fathers and remembering his holy covenant
⁷³ and the oath which he swore to Abraham our Father, to grant us
⁷⁴ that, free from the hands of the enemy, we may serve him without fear
⁷⁵ in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Every person has duties towards the community, since only in it can he or she freely and fully develop his or her personality.

In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare in a democratic society.

These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised in opposition to the purposes and principles of the United Nations. (Art. 29)

Comment:

In Article 29 of the Declaration, we find an expression adjusted to the legal language of our society. The person has the right to develop freely and fully their personality and the limit of their rights ends where the rights of others begin. Again, we can say that having admitted this, the ideal set by God for the world goes much further. The joy of Zechariah, filled with the Holy Spirit, is so because he perceives that the great promises made to "The Fathers" are fulfilled; that God shows mercy to the poorest. Zechariah does not speak in terms of "social contract" but in terms of universal brotherhood. We Christians have much to contribute to this new world defined by the United Nations. If we Christians have the experience of the "excessive love of God the Father" in giving us his Son, we will understand that this "social contract", full of barriers and limitations, falls short, even if it is good.



Bible reading: *Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29*

² I will sing of the love of the LORD forever; from age to age my mouth shall declare your faithfulness.

³ For you have said, "Love is established forever; my loyalty is established in the heavens.

⁴ I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn an oath to my servant David:

⁵ Forever and ever have I founded thy seed, from age to age have I set up thy throne."

²⁷ "He shall call upon me: You, my Father, my God, and rock of my salvation!

²⁹ "I will keep my love for him forever, and my covenant will be loyal to him;

Comment:

At the end of these days, after reading the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a selected collection of the Bible, we are presented with the image of God in the fragility of a child. Year after year, God gives us the same message of the acceptance of human frailty. God becomes one like us to show us, in our language, what we can be capable of if we allow his Spirit to fill us. Before the Son of God incarnated, out of love, as a baby, it is better to be silent contemplating him. We must contemplate, in silence, the scene of Jesus being born in Bethlehem and, after that, launching our lives with determination to collaborate with everyone to construct a new, better, and more fraternal world.



Photo: Miguel Ángel Velasco, oml



