

PRAYER EVENING: THURSDAY, 16th April *from Rosey Feuell*

PRAYING with the (Hidden) LIFE of CHRIST

Work of a lifetime: Alan reminded us at Midnight Mass that it is easy to put the infant Christ into the Crib, but a lifetime's work to take Christ's perfect life out of the Crib and fully into our hearts. Jesus was not just given to us as a sweet baby; He stooped as Saviour and Lord of all into our humble lives and compromised hearts.



It is always good to work at praying with the life of Christ and come to experience its meaning more intimately in our lives.

Introduction: This devotion may be prioritised for Candlemas and Lent, thinking of Christ's childhood and journey towards ministry, the parts of His life on which Scripture is largely silent.

We are given clues to the life He led, through a few Key Events featured in the Church Calendar – and through more general Consideration of Gospel Details suggesting the kind of life Jesus lived in that Holy Land, before His showing to Israel. It clearly contrasted with the solitary, ascetic youth of John the Baptist (Luke 1: 80).

KEY EVENTS TO PRAY WITH:

You may like to choose just ONE of these possibilities, or to work with them all, as you feel drawn, during the time you have available.

Christ the Young Child

Presentation in the Temple: Luke 2: 22-35



Be with Mary and Joseph in the Temple. Talk to them and/or to our Lord about what is happening, what is being said and foreshadowed. Where might you be in the scene?

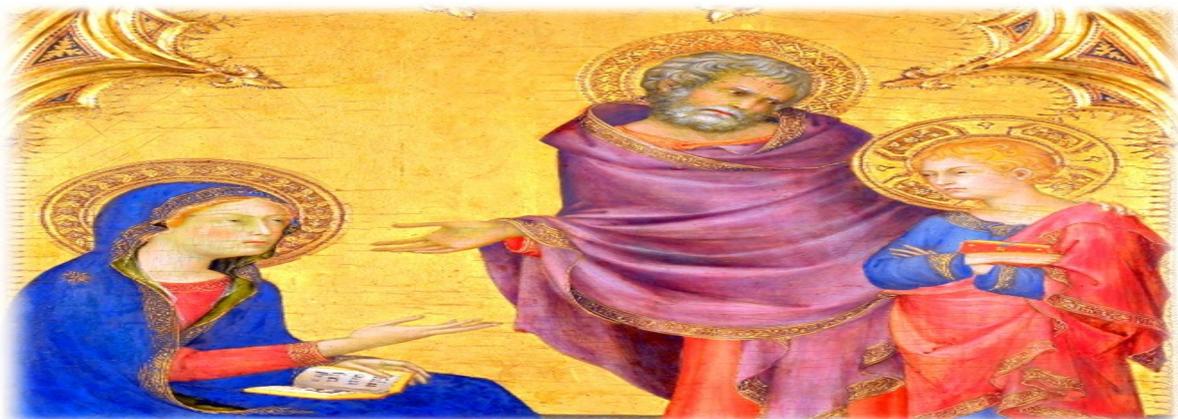
Flight into Egypt: Mathew 2: 13-15



Join Mary, Joseph and Jesus as they escape to Egypt. Talk with them about their experience of being refugees. Maybe hold before them the many refugees in today's world. Notice the carol says, "And He feeleth for our sadness, / And He shareth in our gladness."

Where might you be if you could join the Holy Family on the road, or as they settle down in Egypt, maybe in Alexandria (where there was a strong Jewish community)?

The Finding in the Temple - Simone Martini 1284 – 1344 Siena - Luke 2: 44 - 51



Identify with Mary in her puzzlement and anxiety, or Joseph in his strained sense of responsibility – or with the young Jesus as He struggles to convey His calling/destiny to his parents. Let this intersect with your own sense of calling and/or of being misunderstood by family, onlookers etc.

There is no right approach, no set outcome.... The idea is to "draw profit" from this kind of prayer, allowing thumbnails of Scripture to affect heart, mind, senses, attitudes etc. so we can relish Christ in all He is and all He became on earth...

No need to work out applications to daily life and priorities at this stage.

Let God Himself provoke, surprise and transform us during our reflections.
Let Christ's letting go of heaven for helplessness on earth move us and grow our trust. Share your heart, and maybe your memories, with Him in quiet.

CONSIDERATION OF GOSPEL DETAILS

There is more than this, however, in Scripture; artists, poets, hymn writers have tried to give us glimpses. The Holy Spirit in the heart is the Supreme Teacher about Christ and all His earthly life means.

Let yourself be touched by this window representing the boy Jesus in the carpenter's shop. It's just an artistic, imaginative impression, so you might see it differently. Yet it might also speak to you of His grace, love and maybe trying earthly obedience.

(There's a similar window in the Stained Glass Museum at Ely Cathedral!)



Try the PERSONAL PRAYER EXERCISE below to make this your own!

PERSONAL PRAYER EXERCISE:

We can go on to make our own personal observations of details in the Gospel etc. that are far from imaginative/imaginary and were natural parts of Jesus' human life. I picture a few below, some very familiar, others perhaps unlikely as a prayer focus.



"like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another: We played the flute for you and you did not dance.."

Matthew 11: 16 - 17



"Woe to you.. for you clean the outside of the cup and plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence"

Matthew 23: 26



"Jerusalem .. How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!" Luke 13: 34

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MAKE your own collage of such details from the Gospels and Hebrews 2, 4 & 5: 7. Think about who was there when Jesus met these things: Mary, Joseph, brothers and sisters, playmates, staring children.. maybe the Holy Family will join your prayers. This Jesus also rose from the grave. Let wonder grow.... Write a prayer or draw/colour something to crystallise what has spoken to you most in this exercise.

Recommended Reading: Anne Rice "Christ the Lord – Out of Egypt" Chatto and Windus London 2005 & "Christ the Lord – The Road to Cana" 2008 (both published as "novels"!)