

Joy

THE COMING OF

Called to Action

Matthew 11:2-11

We meet John the Baptist again, but this time he is in prison. Imagine his feelings and thoughts: “What has this all been about?” Having awaited the Messiah with much anticipation, Jesus does not meet the expectations of those of his day.

John sends his disciples to ask, “Are you the one who is to come?” and Jesus gives a startling answer. He tells of an unexpected worldview, and he is very different from what they anticipated (a messiah who would make them a powerful and prosperous nation with victory over their enemies). Rather than answering their question with a

yes or no, Jesus points them to what is taking place because of his ministry: “The blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.”

We often think of the Incarnation as the birth of Jesus. It is that, but Jesus’ words here tell us that the Incarnation is primarily about his ministry — Jesus’ identity is revealed through what he does. We are called to be Jesus’ followers. It’s not just about telling people that we are his followers but also having our actions speak so people will have no doubt.



The Work of Christmas

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,

The work of Christmas begins:

- To find the lost,
- To heal the broken
- To feed the hungry
- To release the prisoner
- To rebuild the nations
- To bring peace among brothers
- To make music in the heart.

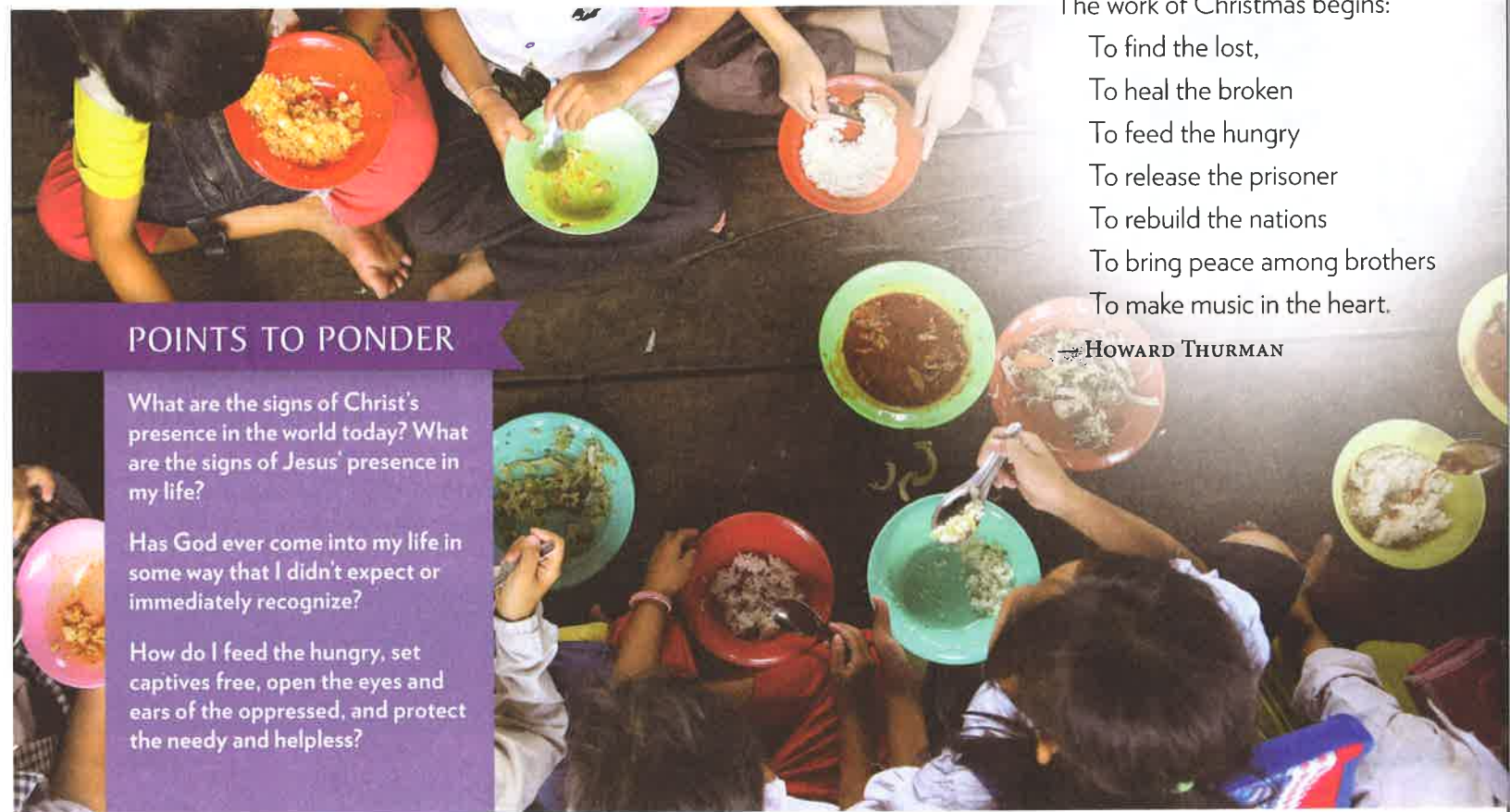
—HOWARD THURMAN

POINTS TO PONDER

What are the signs of Christ’s presence in the world today? What are the signs of Jesus’ presence in my life?

Has God ever come into my life in some way that I didn’t expect or immediately recognize?

How do I feed the hungry, set captives free, open the eyes and ears of the oppressed, and protect the needy and helpless?





Renata Sedmakova / Shutterstock.com

ADVENT FEAST DAYS

December 12 is the feast of **Our Lady of Guadalupe**: On December 9, 1531, Mary appeared to a poor, 57-year-old Aztec Indian convert named Juan Diego. Mary left a marvelous portrait of herself on his mantle. This miraculous image has proved to be ageless and is kept in the shrine built in her honor, the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. In 1910 Our Lady of Guadalupe was declared Patroness of Latin America, and in 1945 Pope Pius XII declared her to be the Patroness of all the Americas.

FAMILYTIME

December 17 begins a “season within a season.” During the last seven days of Advent, the Church prays the O Antiphons. Based on the prophecies of Isaiah (heard in the hymn, “O Come, O Come Emmanuel”), the O Antiphons praise the Messiah with a different title each day: Wisdom, Ruler of the House of Israel, Root of Jesse, Key of David, Rising Dawn, King of the Nations, and Emmanuel. In Latin the initials of the titles make an acrostic which, when read backward, means “Tomorrow I will be there.” During these days, sing “O Come, O Come Emmanuel” at dinner and learn about the O Antiphons by visiting www.osv.com for more information.



3 Ways to Practice Advent Joy

Today is Gaudete (Rejoice) Sunday; yet, there are people around us who are sad. Do a random act of kindness to bring joy to someone today.

Join a celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe with one of the Hispanic parishes in your diocese. Continue to learn about the Church’s vision of comprehensive immigration reform (for example, visit www.justiceforimmigrants.org).

A custom in the monasteries of old found monks providing treats during the O Antiphon days to the community. The gardener might share his finest fruits when they prayed: “O Root of Jesse...” The wine steward might unlock the best wine for “O Key of David...” Give a simple gift — related to the titles of one of the O Antiphons — to someone who is not expecting one from you.

Catechism CONNECTION

“Christ’s whole life is a mystery of *redemption*. Redemption comes to us ... throughout Christ’s entire life: ... in his Incarnation ... in his hidden life ... in his word ... in his healings ... and in his Resurrection.”

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 517

Advent Prayer

God of Compassion, let my life not just be about words. Strengthen in me your grace and compassion so that I may be Jesus’ disciple, a disciple of action, making peace, sharing the Good News, and reverencing all life.