

Dear Friends of St. Jude,

There is a beautiful and honored tradition in the Church of the deacon chanting the great *Praeconium*, that is, the great proclamation from the Roman Martyrology at the Christmas Mass during the Night (sometimes called “Midnight Mass”). It mirrors the great Easter *Praeconium*, that is, the Easter Proclamation at the placing of the Paschal Candle. The Easter Proclamation proclaims that the Light of Christ, seemingly extinguished at His Passion and Death, has become the Sun that never sets, and as St. John teaches, “the Light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it” (John 1:5).

Christmas is the first proclamation of that light, the Light of the World made flesh, made a mere infant, the Christ Child, the first visible spark of that Light. The Christmas Proclamation retells salvation history, God working through His patriarchs and prophets, giving light to the world by the knowledge of God, but now, God has made Himself known in the flesh. Indeed the Christmas Proclamation ends powerfully, announcing that this great feast is “The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ *according to the flesh.*”

Love, in God, is anything *but* abstract. It is real, even *more* real than you or me. But for our sake and our salvation, Love became “fleshy,” and it took on our matter, our nature, our substance, in a way that we could understand Love, beginning with His infancy, the uncontainable and infinite God, now wrapped in swaddling cloths, held in human hands. This highlights a truth of our Faith, that mental knowledge is not enough for us, that we often must have experiential knowledge, that we must experience that knowledge in the flesh, through our senses, for that is how we learn, not simply through infused or directly inspired knowledge.

The Gospel according to St. John continues that God sent a man, St. John the Baptist, to witness to that light, and that he, John the Baptist, was *not* the light, but came to testify *about* the light. He testified to the Light through visible and audible signs, readying the People of God for the coming of the long-desired Messiah.

Likewise, we must recognize that we are *not* the Light, but like the Baptist, we must testify *to* that Light, to that Love, and make that Love incarnate in us, and must make that Love known to others through our words, yes, and through our actions. Love cannot be an abstract concept alone, but an incarnate one. Things, institutions, and ideas cannot love. Individual persons alone truly love, and in Christ, individual people love *in* Love, in Christ in His Church.



St. Jude lived this out in his preaching and missionary activity, making Christ the Light known by his person. Do *we* make Christ known? Do *we* put “flesh” on that Love in our person? A friend of St. Jude is, like St. Jude, someone who makes Christ better known and loved through himself or herself as an instrument, to make the unknowable God known in the flesh.

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*The Virgin and Child, c.1469*  
Guglielmo Giralaldi (It. 1445-1489)  
“Lord you will open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.”

May we, this season and this new year be able to truly say with St. Paul, “Yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20), and may we give witness to that Light, the Love that first loved us. Amen.

The entire staff here at the Shrine joins me in wishing you a Blessed Christmas and New Year, filled with the joy and peace of Christ.

In Christ Our Lord and St. Jude our friend,

*Fr. Dismas Sayre, O.P.*

Fr. Dismas Sayre, OP  
Director

*Christmas Novena, December 25<sup>th</sup> – January 2<sup>nd</sup>*

Christ continues to make himself present among us, truly present among us, in the Eucharist and the Mass. As a people of faith, we will celebrate a novena of Masses for our friends and benefactors. If you wish to send your petitions, please mail them to us on the enclosed slip, or enter them online, and we will place them upon the altar of St. Jude for you and remember them this Christmas.

