

# THE GUANELLIAN COOPERATORS' NEWS

Volume 2, Issue 12

December 2017

## FROM OUR PRESIDENT ...

Dear Fellow Cooperators -

Let me share with you some musical thoughts about the Savior from some Christian musicians as we await the celebration of His birth.

*Emmanuel* by Amy Grant

Emmanuel, Emmanuel  
Wonderful, counselor  
Lord of life, Lord of all  
He's the Prince of peace, mighty God, holy One  
Emmanuel, Emmanuel

*Where I Belong* by Building 429

Sometimes it feels like I'm watching  
From the outside  
Sometimes it feels like I'm breathing  
But am I alive  
I won't keep searching for answers  
That aren't here to find  
All I know is I'm not home yet  
This is not where I belong  
Take this world and give me Jesus  
This is not where I belong  
So when the walls come falling  
Down on me  
And when I'm lost in the current  
Of a raging sea  
I have this Blessed Assurance  
Holding me  
*Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!*  
Ken

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## DECEMBER EVENTS

**12/3** - First Sunday in Advent  
**12/6** - Feast Day of St. Nicholas  
**12/8** - Feast of the Immaculate  
Conception of the BVM  
**12/8** - Feast Day of Fr. Amal  
**12/12** - Feast of Our Lady of  
Guadalupe  
**12/13** - **Happy Birthday** to Fr.  
Joe  
**12/16** - 50th Anniversary of the  
Ordination of Fr. Joseph and Fr.  
Fortunato Celebration  
**12/19** - Anniversary of Birth of St.  
Guanella in 1842  
**12/20** - Anniversary of Baptism of  
St. Guanella in 1842  
**12/21** - Anniversary of the  
Ordination of Fr. Joe in 1967  
**12/25** - Nativity of Our Lord  
**12/28** - Feast of the Holy  
Innocents

## GUANELLIAN MISSION PRINCIPLES

The Innate Value of the Human Person  
The Treasure of the Person is His Heart  
Dignity of the Poor  
Family Spirit

**The Holy Innocents Feast Day** by Fr. Joseph Rinaldo, SdC

In these days we experience the love of Christmas, which gradually draws us to the source of Christian joy. We are called to foster this joy among our relatives, friends and neighbors. It is important that we do not let ourselves be robbed of this joy.

Christmas is also accompanied by tears. The Evangelists did not disguise reality to make it more credible or attractive. They relate the birth of the Son of God as an event full of tragedy and grief. Quoting the prophet Jeremiah, Matthew presents it in the bluntest way: "A voice is heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children" (2,18). It is the sobbing of mothers mourning the death of their children in the face of Herod's thirst for power. Today too, we hear this touching cry of pain, which we neither desire to ignore or to silence. In our world we continue to hear the lamentation of so many mothers, for the death of their children, their innocent children.

To contemplate the manger also means to contemplate this cry of pain, to open our eyes and ears to what is going on around us, and to let our hearts be open to the pain of our neighbors, especially where children are involved. It also means realizing that a sad chapter in history is still being written today. Can we truly experience Christian joy if we turn our backs on these realities? Can Christian joy even exist if we ignore the cry of our brothers and sisters, the cry of the children?

St. Joseph faced the atrocious crimes that were taking place. St. Joseph, the model of an obedient and loyal man, was capable of recognizing God's voice and the mission entrusted to him by the Father. Because he was able to hear God's voice, and was docile to His will, Joseph became more conscious of what was going on around him and was able to interpret these events realistically.

The same thing is asked of us today: to be attentive, and not deaf, to the voice of God, and therefore more sensitive to what is happening all around us. Today, with St. Joseph as our model, we are asked not to let ourselves be robbed of joy. We are asked to protect this joy from the Herods of our own time. Like Joseph, we need the courage to respond to this reality, to arise and take it firmly in hand, the courage to guard this joy from the predators of our time, who devour the innocence of our children. Innocence robbed from them by the oppression of illegal slave labor, prostitution and exploitation. Thousands of our children have fallen into the hands of gangs, criminal organizations and merchants of death. We hear those children and their cries of pain; we also hear the cry of the Church, our Mother, who weeps for the pain caused to her youngest sons and daughters. Today, as we commemorate the feast of the Holy Innocents, let us renew our complete commitment to ensuring that these atrocities will no longer take place in our midst. Let us find the courage needed to take all necessary measures and to protect the lives of our children in every way, so that such crimes may never be repeated. In this area, we support, clearly and faithfully, zero tolerance.

*(continued on page 3)*

*(The Holy Innocents Feast Day continued from page 2)*

Christian joy does not arise on the fringes of reality, by ignoring it or acting as if it did not exist. Christian joy is born from a call to embrace and protect human life, especially that of the holy innocents of our own day. Christmas is a time that challenges us to protect life, to help it be born and grow. It is a time that challenges us to find new courage. The courage that generates ways capable of acknowledging the reality that many of our children are experiencing today, and working to ensure them the bare minimum needed so that their dignity as God's children will not only be respected but, above all, defended. Let us not allow them to be robbed of joy. Let us not allow ourselves to be robbed of joy, but guard it and nourish its growth. †

## BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS MANGER OR NATIVITY SCENE

In its present form the custom of displaying figures depicting the birth of Jesus Christ owes its origin to St. Francis of Assisi, who made the Christmas crèche or manger for Christmas Eve of 1223.

The blessing of the Christmas manger or nativity scene may take place on the Vigil of Christmas or at another suitable time.

When the manger is set up in the home, it is appropriate that it be blessed by a parent or another family member.

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All make the sign of the cross as the **leader** says:

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

**R/.** Who made heaven and earth.

**One of those present or the leader** reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example, **Luke 2:1** (lines 1-8) or **Isaiah 7:10** (lines 10-15, the birth of Emmanuel).

**Leader:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**R/.** Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

The **leader** prays with hands joined:

God of every nation and people,  
from the very beginning of creation  
you have made manifest your love:  
when our need for a Savior was great  
you sent your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary.  
To our lives he brings joy and peace,  
justice, mercy, and love.

Lord,  
bless all who look upon this manger;  
may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus,  
and raise our thoughts to him,  
who is God-with-us and Savior of all,  
and who lives and reigns forever and ever.

**R/.** Amen. †

—From *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*



## BLESSING OF AN ADVENT WREATH

The use of the Advent Wreath is a traditional practice which has found its place in the Church as well as in the home. The blessing of an Advent Wreath takes place on the First Sunday of Advent or on the evening before the First Sunday of Advent.

When the blessing of the Advent Wreath is celebrated in the home, it is appropriate that it be blessed by a parent or another member of the family.

All make the sign of the cross as the **leader** says:

Our help is in the name of the Lord.

**Response (R/.)** Who made heaven and earth.

Then the Scripture, **Isaiah 9**: (lines 1-2 and 5-6) or **Isaiah 63** (lines 16-17 & 19) or **Isaiah 64** (lines 2-7) is read:

**Leader:** The Word of the Lord.

**R/.** Thanks be to God.

With hands joined, the **leader** says:

Lord our God,  
we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ:  
he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples,  
he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us,  
he is the Savior of every nation.  
Lord God,  
let your blessing come upon us  
as we light the candles of this wreath.  
May the wreath and its light  
be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation.  
May he come quickly and not delay.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**R/.** Amen.

The blessing may conclude with a verse from

**"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel":**

O come, desire of nations, bind  
in one the hearts of humankind;  
bid ev'ry sad division cease  
and be thyself our Prince of peace.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel. †

—From *Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*



## BLESSING OF A CHRISTMAS TREE

The use of the Christmas tree is relatively modern. Its origins are found in the medieval mystery plays that depicted the tree of paradise and the Christmas light or candle that symbolized Christ, the Light of the world. According to custom, the Christmas tree is set up just before Christmas and may remain in place until the Solemnity of Epiphany. The lights of the tree are illuminated after the prayer of blessing.

In the home the Christmas tree may be blessed by a parent or another family member, in connection with the evening meal on the Vigil of Christmas or at another suitable time on Christmas Day.

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When all have gathered, a suitable song may be sung.

The **leader** makes the sign of the cross, and **all reply** "Amen."

The **leader** may greet those present in the following words:

Let us glorify Christ our light, who brings salvation and peace into our midst, now and forever.

**R/.** Amen.

In the following or similar words, the **leader** prepares those present for the blessing:

My brothers and sisters, amidst signs and wonders Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea: his birth brings joy to our hearts and enlightenment to our minds. With this tree, decorated and adorned, may we welcome Christ among us; may its lights guide us to the perfect light.

**One of those present or the leader** reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example, **Titus 3:4** (lines 4-7) or **Ezekiel 17:22** (lines 22-24 4; I will plant a tender shoot on the mountain heights of Israel.)

**Reader:** The Word of the Lord.

**R/.** Thanks be to God.

The intercessions are then said. The **leader** says:

Let us ask God to send his blessing upon us and upon this sign of our faith in the Lord.

**R/.** Lord, give light to our hearts.

That this tree of lights may remind us of the tree of glory on which Christ accomplished our salvation, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

That the joy of Christmas may always be in our homes, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

That the peace of Christ may dwell in our hearts and in the world, let us pray to the Lord. **R/.**

*(continued on page 6)*

*(Blessings of a Christmas Tree continued from page 5)*

After the intercessions the **leader** invites all present to say the Lord's Prayer.

The **leader** says the prayer with hands joined:

Lord our God,  
we praise you for the light of creation:  
the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night.  
We praise you for the light of Israel:  
the Law, the prophets, and the wisdom of the Scriptures.  
We praise you for Jesus Christ, your Son:  
he is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace,  
who fills us with the wonder of your love.  
Lord God,  
let your blessing come upon us  
as we illumine this tree.  
May the light and cheer it gives  
be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts.  
May all who delight in this tree  
come to the knowledge and joy of salvation.  
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

**R/.** Amen.

The lights of the tree are then illuminated.

The **leader** concludes the rite by signing himself or herself with the sign of the cross and saying:

May the God of glory fill our hearts with peace and joy, now and forever.

**R/.** Amen.

The blessing concludes with a verse from "O Come, O Come, Emmanuel":

O come, thou dayspring, come and cheer  
our spirits by thine advent here;  
disperse the gloomy clouds of night  
and death's dark shadow put to flight.  
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel  
shall come to thee, O Israel. †

*—From Catholic Household Blessings & Prayers*

"It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of  
goodness and thus to open the doors of hope."

*- Pope Benedict XVI*

## **Holy Christmas** by Fr. Louis Guanella

*May your heart exult for the Savior is born in Bethlehem*

1. All the Jews, who had already been condemned to death by King Ahasuerus, were approaching the final day. They were very apprehensive, but a rumor spread around: "Ahasuerus has forgiven us, the king has pardoned us!" The entire humankind had been condemned by God's justice to death in hell, when a voice resounds: "God has forgiven us, God has pardoned us!" The signal of forgiveness is the grace of the Lord, Jesus Christ himself, the true Son of the Eternal Father, who has appeared in Bethlehem to visit his people to bless them.
2. Bethlehem has become the holy city, the illustrious city. From there, as from the center of a most vivid sun, depart rays of splendid light. Look at it and enlighten the eyes of your mind! I know that not all men pay attention to such bright light, as the owl disdains the light of the day, yet do all the others, both men and animals, miss admiring the beauty of it? Bethlehem has become the house of bread, because Jesus appearing in it has come as the savior who satiates all souls with his food of truth. Let us, then, hasten to Bethlehem, to the Savior who gives life! I know very well that others do not even make a move toward it, yet if you see a madman who wants to starve, feel bad about him, but see that you feed yourself.
3. Nourish yourself nutritiously, so that you may be able to fulfill your duties. You are the child who, in order to please God the Father, is expected to restrain the evil inclinations that are in you. Above all, you must be benevolent toward your brothers and sisters, yet just. You must consistently turn your loving attention to God. May the saints in heaven and the just on earth look at you with joy as they looked at Joseph and Mary in admiration! May you conduct yourself in this world with the modest behavior that belongs to the angels who are praising God!
4. To this end, come in spirit to the manger of Jesus as the shepherds did, and adore your Savior. If you see that curious Bethlehemites come in yet do not believe the mysteries of the poor and humble Jesus, do not pay attention to them. If you see that the leaders of the people themselves come in and abhor the purity surrounding the crib of the divine infant, pity them in the bottom of your heart and pray for them, the wicked ones. These love honors, which after all are vain smoke; they crave for riches that are vile mire. They long for earthly pleasures. Yet what are all these pleasures of the world? They are vanities that press on one another like waves in the sea; they are satisfactions that vanish like wind; at best, they are nonsense that goes by within the period of a century. Then, see for yourself if, having to live in an evil world, it doesn't pay to remain faithful to Jesus!
5. Time will come, and perhaps it is not far off, when Jesus, no longer a poor baby, but a benevolent judge and a loving father, will come to welcome you. What a joy then! You will exclaim: "I waited for my God and now here He is! I waited for the glory of my Savior and now I, myself, am surrounded by the splendor of his blessedness! I am with God and am blessed forever." What a bliss of pleasure it will be, what a joy, what a most high jubilation! Fortunate you will be if you do not delay in following Jesus, humble in the manger. If you do not feel ashamed being close to him in the humility of Bethlehem, you will one day enjoy being close to him in the glory of paradise.

### *Reflections*

1. *May your heart exult because the Savior is born in Bethlehem.*
2. *From Bethlehem departs the light that illuminates the world, the bread that sustains the life of men.*
3. *Follow, then, the examples of Jesus by living soberly, with justice and piety.*
4. *Do not look at the gloom and the vices of faithless and evil people.* †

## **St. Nicholas the Ultimate Giver of Self** by Kelly Flaherty, Guanellian Cooperator

I recently read an article in the secular media about how the lie of Santa Claus can damage the relationship between parents and children. I thought, "how sad!" The entire concept that society has of St. Nicholas is that of some mystical bearer of toys, electronics and all material desires! We as Catholics need to help spread the real truth about this saint whose feast day is actually December 6th. The 'real' St. Nicholas was the Bishop of Myra who gave to the poor and needy, not everyone. The most widely retold legend is how he gave his wealth to a poor man who had three daughters in need of dowries. There is even a story of how he resuscitated three children that had been killed by an innkeeper and brined in a tub. He fought fiercely against the Arian heresy and paganism and was imprisoned more than one time for his defense of the faith.

"St. Nicholas is celebrated as the patron saint of several classes of people, especially, in the East, of sailors and in the West of children. The first of these patronage is most likely due to the legend that during his lifetime, he appeared to storm tossed mariners who invoked his aid off the coast of Lycia and brought them safely to port. Sailors in the Aegean and Ionian seas, following a common Eastern custom, had their "star of St. Nicholas" and wished one another a good voyage in the phrase 'May St. Nicholas hold the tiller.'



"The legend of the "three children" is credited to his patronage of children and various observances, ecclesiastical and secular, connected there with; such were the boy bishop and especially in Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands, the giving of presents in his name at Christmas time.

"This custom in England is not a survival from Catholic times. It was popularized in America by the Dutch Protestants of New Amsterdam who converted the popish saint into a Nordic magician (Santa Claus = Sint Klaes = Saint Nicholas) and was introduced into this country by Bret Harte. It is not the only 'good old English custom' which, however good, is not "old English," at any rate in its present form. The deliverance of the three imperial officers naturally caused St. Nicholas to be invoked by and on behalf of prisoners and captives, and many miracles of his intervention are recorded in the Middle Ages.

*(continued on page 10)*



## THE STORY OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE

The feast in honor of Our Lady of Guadalupe goes back to the 16th century. Chronicles of that period tell us the story.

A poor Indian named Cuauhtlatohuac was baptized and given the name Juan Diego. He was a 57-year-old widower, and lived in a small village near Mexico City. On Saturday morning December 9, 1531, he was on his way to a nearby barrio to attend Mass in honor of Our Lady.

Juan was walking by a hill called Tepeyac when he heard beautiful music like the warbling of birds. A radiant cloud appeared, and within it stood an Indian maiden dressed like an Aztec princess. The lady spoke to him in his own language and sent him to the bishop of Mexico, a Franciscan named Juan de Zumarraga. The bishop was to build a chapel in the place where the lady appeared.

Eventually the bishop told Juan to have the lady give him a sign. About this same time Juan's uncle became seriously ill. This led poor Juan to try to avoid the lady. Nevertheless the lady found Juan, assured him that his uncle would recover, and provided roses for Juan to carry to the bishop in his cape or tilma.

On December 12, when Juan Diego opened his tilma in the bishop's presence, the roses fell to the ground, and the bishop sank to his knees. On the tilma where the roses had been appeared an image of Mary exactly as she had appeared at the hill of Tepeyac.

### Reflection

Mary's appearance to Juan Diego as one of his people is a powerful reminder that Mary—and the God who sent her—accept all peoples. In the context of the sometimes rude and cruel treatment of the Indians by the Spaniards, the apparition was a rebuke to the Spaniards and an event of vast significance for the indigenous population. While a number of them had converted before this incident, they now came in droves. According to a contemporary chronicler, nine million Indians became Catholic in a very short time. In these days when we hear so much about God's preferential option for the poor, Our Lady of Guadalupe cries out to us that God's love for and identification with the poor is an age-old truth that stems from the Gospel itself.

Our Lady of Guadalupe is the Patron Saint of:

The Americas

Mexico †

*(Information for this article is from [www.franciscanmedia.org](http://www.franciscanmedia.org))*

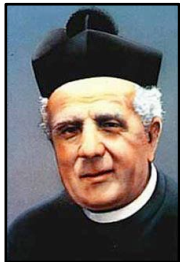
*(St. Nicholas ... continued from page 8)*

"The greatest popularity of St. Nicholas is found in Russia. With St. Andrew the Apostle, he is patron of the nation. He is also the patron saint of Greece, Apulia, Sicily and Lorraine, and of many cities and dioceses (including Galway) and churches innumerable. St. Nicholas became recognized as a saint long before the Roman Catholic Church began the regular canonizing procedures in the late 10th century. Therefore, he does not have a specific date of canonization, rather records of him exist in a gradual spread until his stories became widely known and celebrated." (excerpted from Catholic.org)

As you can see there is way more to the 'real' St. Nicholas than society at large seems to advertise. Perhaps we as Catholics can make our Christmas celebrations more about Christ and lead in the revolution to forget about buying presents for people who already have more than enough and instead "give bread and the Lord" to those who don't. This alone is the gift that Christ wants on His birthday, your generosity to His lowly ones. †

DUE TO THE DECEMBER 16 CELEBRATION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ORDINATION OF FR. JOE AND FR. FORTUNATO, THERE WILL NOT BE A REGULAR MEETING OF THE GUANELLIANS IN DECEMBER.

### Prayer to St. Louis Guanella



O St. Louis Guanella, apostle of charity, you spread the treasures of your heart to the poor and suffering, whom you dearly loved, in a world filled with hatred and selfishness. Obtain for us from Divine Providence an ever increasing love for God and our neighbors. Obtain for us also the favor we are asking for... and the grace of final perseverance. Amen

Pray: Our Father, Hail Mary, Glory Be  
St. Louis Guanella, pray for us!

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