



SIEBENQUELL

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# Between Shepherds and Magi

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CONVENT CHURCH MARIA LAACH

I would never have held such a thing to be possible!

A year ago my life ran its normal course; I was satisfied, indeed, happy: betrothed to a young woman whom I loved, the prospect of a wedding before me, there was plenty of work on the building site here in Nazareth and in the surrounding area, especially in Sepphoris. Sure, we all suffered under the Roman occupation, but still, I looked to my future and our future with confidence.

Then, however, last summer, I realised that Mary, my fiancé, was pregnant. That hurt so much! Under these circumstances a marriage was impossible. Yet, I loved her – it broke my heart. Finally, I decided not to hand her over to the authorities, but rather to dismiss her quietly.

And in these quiet days and these nights full of doubt, a deep certainty dawned in me. It was like a voice coming from the LORD, which said: »No, take Mary to yourself and care for her and the child. It is woven of the Spirit and long awaited. He will be called Emmanuel, as was promised long ago.« And I – truly I – should give the child his name: Jesus. At that point my heart grew warm, since I know what this name means.

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In the months since then our love grew deeper, our trust in each other grew and we developed a special way of attentively living with each other and for each other each day.

When the occupational forces issued the decree that each person, within a short span of time, should enroll his name in the taxation lists in the city of his fathers, such a trip was actually too late for Mary. For we had to travel to Bethlehem. So we set out, for many days – fortunately not in the summer heat.

Exhausted we finally arrived in Bethlehem; yet, there I could have screamed or cried: no one had a bed for Mary, let alone a room for us. A compassionate innkeeper offered us a stable out in the fields. And precisely there our child was born. What an outrageous experience – the birth of this child, entrusted to me, out in the fields!

The first to visit us in the night were shepherds. On the one hand it was obvious, because here we were in their world: on the other hand, we were astonished as to how they learned of the birth: heavenly messengers, light, songs of jubilation of peace on earth through this child! As wretched as we were as we lay upon the straw and protected the child, so radiant was that which filled out hearts through the mouths of these simple men.

We remained in Bethlehem for several days – Mary regained her strength.

Then strangers approached. They seemed to be of high estate, their garments were resplendent despite the dust. They made a dignified, learned impression and remained standing before the house in which we were. They had searched for our child. They were knowledgeable about the stars and an extraordinary appearance in the heavens had spoken to them about the birth of a king and they had set out to »pay homage«, to this child, as they put it. This they did – reverent, thoughtful, each with a noble gift at hand: gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Now I stand here and gaze at Mary and the child. My heart is moved: How is it, that despised shepherds, sent by heaven, and dignified strangers from the East, led by a star, come to visit us in order to greet this child full of joy? How deeply connected I feel to people whose world never had anything to do with mine!

All my plans from one year ago have been nullified. But there is something else, something greater. My heart is filled with it. I attune myself to the joyous heartbeat of strangers who have become close. And I feel a unknown love and care for this child.

Yes, I will give this son his name: Jesus – God saves!

Rosemarie Monnerjahn

Vallendar, January 2, 2020