

2nd Sunday after Christmas
(Ecclesiasticus 24:1-2. 8-12 / John 1:1-18)
04.01.2026
Light, Life & Love

“The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.” (1:4 *NLT*)

This verse from the Prologue of St John that we have just heard describes the Incarnation as an act of overflowing generosity. As Charles Wesley wrote in the Christmas Carol *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*: “Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness! Light and life to all he brings.”

These past days, most of us have been partying, exchanging gifts and good wishes, enjoying company and chocolates. All this is part of a good Christmas season and let us give thanks for it. There is no need for us to feel guilty about it. Yet we must ask ourselves: are we deeply and truly more alive for all that?

We must admit that all our celebrations do not meet the deep restlessness of our hearts, nor do they really equip us for the wounds that weigh us down or strengthen us for the many challenges and difficulties people and circumstances throw at us. If we are self-centred and ego-driven, if we satisfy ourselves with the short term and small pleasures that the world provide then we condemn ourselves to live impoverished lives.

What we need in order to be alive and to be able to face up to the unavoidable ups and downs of life, is meaning and purpose; we need stable ground on which we can stand firm, a safe environment which is supportive and encouraging whatever happens, whatever we do or whatever is done to us.

Superficiality sucks life out of us because we long for depth, truth and reality.

In this context it is important to give thanks for the synodal journey initiated by Pope Francis in the Catholic Church. It is an opportunity for our Church to deal with reality, to listen and to reflect on the questions that come our way, the questions that spur us on to go deeper in our faith and in what it means to be a Catholic in the world in 2026.

Allow me to name just a few of the most dominant themes that require our particular attention: Lay Ministry and Parish Life; Liturgy and Worship Renewal; Sexuality and LGBTQ+ Inclusion; Women’s Participation and Leadership; Young People and the Future of the Church... (cf. *Baptised and Sent*). These themes and many others must be the subject of serious conversations and respectful discernment so that we may be really alive and thus be able to be seeds of life and light in a world which is seeking ethical and political direction.

Lukewarmness and lethargy, rigidity and ideology are not Christian values and life-giving options, they smother the fire within us and prevent us from accomplishing our mission among all men and women.

At community and personal levels, if we want to discover what makes us fully alive and keeps us burning brightly we have to turn to St John who in his first letter wrote: “Whoever says, ‘I am in the light’, while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light.” (2:9-10) Since human life is impossible without light, human life is impossible without love. When our love becomes petty and superficial, when we opt for a very selective and conditional love, we cannot expect to be fully alive.

In his Rule, St Benedict expects the monks to be moved by “a most fervent love” (72:3). The Latin word translated here by *fervent* is about fire, so the love that St Benedict has in mind is a “most burning love.”

It is this love which has the power to defeat death, change the course of human history and move hearts and minds. It is this love which makes us fully alive and not merely people who are just surviving. It is this love which, at work within us, is able to transform our lives in such a way that, in their poverty and weakness, they may enlighten all men and women.

In the Christmas Carol *O Little Town of Bethlehem*, we are told that: “While mortals sleep, the angels keep Their watch of wondering love.”

While we are not angels but mortals, in our turn, we are called to look at Jesus with amazement and deep love. But as we heard in the verse of the 1st letter of St John that I quoted a few minutes ago, we have also to look at all our brothers and sisters, all of creation with the same amazement, respectful and tender love.

Yet another Christmas Carol states it very clearly: “Truly [Christ] taught us to love one another; His law is love and His gospel is peace.” (*O Holy Night*) So we cannot but begin this year 2026 by committing ourselves to love. It might be important to clarify that the Christian law of love does not imply that we have to like or agree with everybody. The law of love is about respecting the human dignity of all and desiring the best for all our brothers and sisters, it is about speaking and acting in such a way that do not hurt or belittle anybody. Christian love is about serving and caring for those who are on the margins, those who suffer in one way or another. Loving in this way we will be truly alive and able to become lights of the world (cf. Mt 5:14).

In his letter to the Ephesians, St Paul reminds us that “the Father (...) chose us in Christ (...) to live through love in his presence.” (1:4-5)

Let us all pray fervently that, through love, we may journey with one another graciously and with reverence, and work together for the common good.