

Christmas Readings

2021

From the Judeo - Christian Scriptures
and the Writings of Emanuel Swedenborg



Merry Christmas

from your friends in the Glenview New Church.

*These Christmas Readings are gathered around a different theme each year. To receive the readings via daily e-mail, go to:
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**GLENVIEW
NEW CHURCH**

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Good Success

Introduction

This year's Christmas readings are gathered around the theme of "Good Success." This theme is expressed in the Book of Joshua as follows: "This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For *then* you will make your way prosperous, and *then* you will have good success" (Joshua 1:8, emphasis added). One of the things this Scripture invites us to consider is that the Lord's view of success and our view of it sometimes differ. His view will always include a look to eternal realities and what matters most. Ours will sometimes focus on the here and now, so much so that spiritual concerns may get pushed to the periphery.

The Christmas season is a great example. How often do we find ourselves getting caught up in the gifts, events, schedules, and worrying about how to get through the season—in a way that distracts us from the true meaning of Christmas and the Lord's birth on earth? The readings in this booklet invite you to "meditate on the Book of the Law"—the Word of God. Each reading focuses on some quality or action that shows forth the life the Lord would have us live, or ways in which we can be responsive to His leadership. The hope is that we will, by means of these readings, be able to see more of the Lord's will for our lives—more of the "success" that He calls "good"—and that we will be inspired to put that will into action this Christmas season and on into the new year.

Format: Each daily reading in this booklet features part of the Christmas story, followed by commentary from the 18th Century theologian, Emanuel Swedenborg. Each reading and commentary touch on one part of the divine birth in us. Underlining has been used in some of the scriptural quotations to help link them to the theological points. At the end of the readings for each day is a set of reflections together with some questions for consideration. There are twenty-five readings in all, designed to carry you from December 1st through Christmas day. Our hope is that these readings, together with worship services and church events available throughout the world, will provide a sense of uplift and spiritual renewal in your life this Christmas season, as you continue on the pathway of good success.

Willing to Be Led

December 1

There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. (Luke 1)

Those who are in a state of innocence wish to be led by the Lord and not by themselves. They love everything that is good and find delight in everything that is true. They live content with what is their own, whether it be little or much, because they know that they receive just as much as is good for them—those receiving little for whom a little is useful, and those receiving much for whom much is useful. Also they do not themselves know what is good for them. The Lord alone knows this, who looks in all things that He provides to what is eternal. They love nothing so much as to be led by the Lord, attributing all things they receive to Him. They are kept apart from what is their own (i.e., what is of self, not of the Lord), and to the extent that they are kept apart from this the Lord flows into them. As a consequence of this, whatever they hear from the Lord—whether through His Word or by means of preaching—they do not store up in their memory but instantly obey it, that is, will it and do it. Such people for the most part appear outwardly simple, but inwardly they are wise and prudent. (*Heaven and Hell* 278)

Within each person there is an inner (heavenly) part that ought to command and an outer (earthly) part that ought to obey. The latter is obedient when it does not have the world but heaven, not self but the neighbor, as its end in view. (*Secrets of Heaven* 5368.1-2)

It is written, “If you walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments and do them, I will give peace in the land, so that you may lie down securely, and none shall make you afraid” (Lev. 26:3, 6).

Reflection: The first part of the Christmas story reminds us of a godly couple—Zacharias and Elizabeth. Together they walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. What a potent platform this is for good success—a willingness dutifully to do what the Lord wants us to be doing in our lives. The writings of Emanuel Swedenborg broaden and deepen this concept of godly existence by talking about “innocence.” They define it, not in terms of personal purity, but in terms of a “willingness to be led by the Lord.” They suggest that people who are innocent are people who “love everything good and find delight in everything true”; they live content with what they have; they trust that the Lord knows what is best and that He is looking out for their eternal welfare. Whatever they hear from the Lord they instantly obey by willing it and doing it. As a result they are withheld by the Lord from different forms of selfishness, and they’re given an abiding sense of peace, contentment, and safety in their lives. What are one or two efforts you have made over the years to “walk in the commandments of the Lord blameless”? What are one or two good things (“good successes”) that have happened in your life as a result? What is one way that you can achieve this kind of innocence today—at the start of the Christmas season?

Notes:

Holy Fear

December 2

So it was, that while Zacharias was serving as priest before God in the order of his division, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. And the angel said to him, "Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth." (Luke 1)

There are two kinds fear—fear in what is not sacred, and fear in what is sacred. Fear in what is sacred is a fear that good people experience. This fear is called reverential fear. It is the result of people's wonder at and longing for what is divine; also a result of their love. The fear that belongs to love is a fear of injuring the Lord in any way, or of injuring the neighbor in any way, thus of injuring what is good and true in any way, and consequently of injuring the sacred things of love and faith and the consequent worship. (*Secrets of Heaven* 3718)

In regard to fear of the Divine let the following be said: With upright people it is an inward fear, that is, fear for their salvation (or fear lest they should lose their own souls to be exact) and on that account lest they should do anything contrary to conscience, that is, contrary to the truth and goodness which comprise conscience. Consequently, they fear lest they should do anything contrary to what is just and fair, thus contrary to their neighbor. This fear becomes holy fear to the extent that it is wedded to charitable desire in them, and especially to the extent that it is wedded to love of the Lord. Such fear then becomes like that which young children feel toward their parents whom they love. This is what the fear of God is like, which the Word of the Lord refers to many times. (*Secrets of Heaven* 7280)

Reflection: The readings for today begin with a person being “afraid” in the normal sense of the word—Zacharias was afraid—and they end with some reflections on a different kind of fear—fear of doing harm to the Lord or to our neighbor. In addition, the readings introduce us to laudable goals of “longing for what is divine,” striving for what is just and fair, and acting according to conscience. What are one or two things that might startle you or make you afraid—in the way that Zacharias was startled and afraid? On a deeper level, what are one or two ways that you fear doing harm to the Lord or your neighbor? What is one way that you “long for what is Divine,” strive for what is just and fair, and act according to conscience? How do any of these things contribute to “good success” in your life?

Notes:

Prepared for Good Success

December 3

The angel of the Lord said to Zacharias, “He (John) will be great in the sight of the Lord.... He will also go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1)

It was said of John the Baptist that “he should go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elijah,” and that he was the “Elijah” who was to come (Matthew 11:14). This is because John, like Elijah, represented the Lord in relation to the Word of God, and he thence represented the Word. And as divine wisdom and divine power are in the Word, these are meant by “the spirit and power of Elijah.” (*Apocalypse Explained* 724.9)

The power of divine truth is directed especially against falsities and evils, thus against the hells. The fight against these things must be waged by means of truths from the literal sense of the Word. What’s more, it is by means of the truths in people that the Lord has the power to save them; for they are reformed and regenerated, and are at the same time taken out of hell and introduced into heaven, by means of truths from the Word. (*Doctrine of the Sacred Scripture* 49)

The order of influx is as follows: As people instruct their understanding, they prepare it for the reception of light and hence for wisdom from heaven. As they do the good works that are born of goodwill, they prepare their will for reception of the heat of heaven, or of love. Like one who cuts a diamond, they make preparation for the splendor of light to be diffused from themselves. (*Additions to True Christianity*, IV:1-3, part of *Posthumous Theological Works*, vol. 1)

Reflection: John the Baptist is a powerful figure in the Word of the Lord. And why not? He symbolizes the power that the Lord's divine love and wisdom can have in our lives, coming to us through the pages of His Word. The Lord told Joshua to "meditate" in the Book of the Law (the Word) so that he could have good success. The Lord also calls us, through John the Baptist, to learn from the Word and put what He says into practice. John's baptism is a symbol of our commitment to do just that. What is one way that you can work in harmony with the Lord's teachings today—to "cut the diamond" so to speak, and prepare yourself so that "the splendor of light" may spread from you to others? This is good success.

Notes:

Be Fully Useful

December 4

So it was, as soon as the days of his service were completed, that Zacharias departed to his own house. (Luke 1)

A charitable life is to will well and do well to the neighbor; to act in every work from justice and equity, from goodness and truth, and also in every duty. In a word, a charitable life consists in performing useful services. (*Apocalypse Explained* 325.4)

Worship does not consist in prayers and external devotion, but in a charitable life (i.e., a life of goodwill and good action). Prayers are only its outward forms, for they proceed from us through our mouth. From this it is clear that those who place all worship of the Divine in oral piety, and not in practical piety, are much mistaken. Practical piety is to act in every work and in every duty from sincerity and rightness, and from justice and equity, and this because it is commanded by the Lord in His Word. For in this way people look to heaven and the Lord in every work, and thus they are united with Him. (*Apocalypse Explained* 325.3-4)

Worship of the Divine consists primarily in a charitable life and secondarily in a life of piety. A charitable life is the primary thing. (*Apocalypse Explained* 325.4)

Reflection: Our readings today suggest that being of useful service—like Zacharias was—is one of the main ways we enjoy good success. Being useful is more than busy work or accomplishing things because we have to. Being fully useful incorporates all of who we are—what we love, desire, and value most in life—and channels it in the direction of helping others in wise ways to the best of our ability. Being fully useful includes coming from a place of sincerity, justice, and fairness in the things we do and say. And surprisingly, perhaps, being useful is one of the main ways we’re able to “look to heaven and the Lord” and be “united with Him.” What is one thing that you value most, long for in life, or strongly stand for in relationships? What is one way you seek to achieve this thing in your day-to-day life and interactions with others? What is one way that you hope this will impact the lives of others for good?

Notes:

A Genuine Desire to Know

December 5

Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!" But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. (Luke 1)

The virgin of whom the Lord was born symbolizes the Church as to an affection for truth. A genuine affection for truth consists in willing and desiring to know the real truths of faith, with a view to putting them to good use, and also for the sake of the life one should lead. Those with a genuine affection for truth examine the Scriptures and pray to the Lord for enlightenment; and when they receive it their hearts rejoice. (*God the Savior 37—in Post-humous Theological Works; Secrets of Heaven 8993.3-4*)

Desire or love constitutes the life of everyone. Consequently, those who are in a desire for truth are constantly serving the Lord, even when they are in their vocations, business, and employments. For the desire that is within a person reigns continually and serves. What's more, this is the service that the Lord desires. (*Apocalypse Explained 478.3*)

Spiritual people, while being regenerated, first learn matters of doctrine concerning truth. Next they are stirred by an affection for them. After this they are stirred by an affection for the truths which these matters of doctrine hold within them. And at length they desire to live according to them. Thus while undergoing regeneration, the spiritual part of a person advances from the doctrine of truth toward the good of life. This is the way that people are led by the Lord. (*Secrets of Heaven 3332.2, Spiritual Diary 5796*)

Reflection: Mary's name is one that is central to the Christmas story and to our spiritual lives. Mary's name means "exalted of God." Mary herself was "highly favored," "blessed," and she was the one who would conceive and bring forth a Son. On a personal level she symbolizes a longing that we feel to know the real truth about things in our spiritual lives and in our walk with the Lord. She is that part of us that willingly accepts the Lord's messages when we hear them, and puts them to use in our lives. She symbolizes an openness to all the promises the Lord makes to us in His Word. What are one or two of the most beautiful promises you have known from the Word and that are precious to you—such as the promise of life in heaven, or the promise of genuine love in marriage, or the promise of a world filled with peace, love, and happiness? What is one truth from the Word that you've either discovered or re-discovered over the past year that has held real meaning for you? What is one thing that you wish to know from the Lord today? How might any of these things relate to good success?

Notes:

Do Good Things

December 6

And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest;...and of His kingdom there will be no end.” Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1)

The words of Scripture, “to bring forth,” have to do with the following:

- Matters related to spiritual birth.
- Procreation of such things as pertain to the Lord’s church.
- Goodness and truth coming into existence.
- Making truth fruitful by doing it, from which comes reformation.

(*Secrets of Heaven* 4586, 3298, 4070, *Apocalypse Explained* 721.16-17)

When present in our *will*, goodness is in its own womb and is first brought forth. But when it is present in our *actions*—that is, when our will leads us to bring forth what is good—that goodness leaves the womb and is born. The expressions “being born again” and “being regenerated” are also used with the same meaning. (*Secrets of Heaven* 4904)

It is written: “Bring forth abundantly in the earth, and be multiplied in it.” In regard to this scripture the case is this: Nothing is multiplied with regenerate people in their outward self except as the result of charity (i.e., willing well and doing well). Willing well and doing well are like heat in springtime or summer, which causes grass, plants, and trees to grow. Without that spiritual heat nothing grows. (*Secrets of Heaven* 1016)

Reflection: There is something wonderfully telling about the image of Mary “bringing forth a Son.” Any time we do what is good, something living and beautiful is created—in us, for others, and in the Lord’s kingdom. We do an action, and the Lord brings life—a sense of connection with others, some kind of joy, a feeling of gratitude or love between people, etc. He also makes us more spiritually alive. As you think back over the past few days, what good actions did you witness or do yourself that had a positive impact? What would you like to do in the coming days that is life-giving?

Notes:

A Spirit of Co-Operation

December 7

Then Mary said, “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1)

The Lord desires a state of humility in people. This is something He wants for *their* sake [not His own]. The reason for this is that when that state exists in a person the Lord can flow in with heavenly goodness. (*Secrets of Heaven* 5957, emphasis added)

I have talked much with angels about innocence, and I have been told that innocence is the “being” of all goodness, and that therefore goodness is good to the extent that it has innocence within it; consequently that wisdom is wisdom to the extent that it partakes of innocence. The same is true of love, goodwill, and faith. Innocence is a willingness to be led by the Lord. (*Heaven and Hell* 281)

The new birth or creation of a person is effected by the Lord alone through goodwill and faith as the two means, with the person cooperating. (*True Christianity* 576)

*Reflection: Our scripture today is one of the greatest statements of calm assurance in all of the Lord's Word. Mary's life and will were fully aligned with God's life and will for her. She was willing to be led by God. She trusted His leadership in her life, she was confident that things would turn out well, and she was at peace. What is one promise of goodness that the Lord makes for your life today? How do you respond to that promise from the heart? How do you think "willingness" and also a **will** to be led by the Lord could translate into "good success" for you this Christmas season?*

Notes:

Experience the Joy of Others as Joy in Yourself

December 8

Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord.” (Luke 1)

The essence of love is that what is ours should belong to someone else. Feeling the joy of someone else as joy in ourselves—that is loving. (*Divine Love and Wisdom* 47)

It is the delight of all in heaven to share their delights and blessings with others. (*Heaven and Hell* 399)

A life of goodwill consists in thinking well of others, wishing them well, and in perceiving joy in oneself from the fact that others also are saved. (*Secrets of Heaven* 2284.5)

The nature of the Lord’s joy surpasses all understanding because it is that of the Infinite. Infinite joy exists when goodness is received by those in heaven and in the Church. (*Secrets of Heaven* 8672)

Reflection: The readings for today call us to celebrate good things in the lives of others. Heavenly joy is like this. People in heaven not only feel joy when good things happen to others, they also love to be agents of that good. One key way we can experience this kind of joy at Christmastime is to take delight in the talents and abilities of others, to thrill at their accomplishments, and to feel their joy as joy in ourselves. What are one or two ways that you can do this during the Christmas season this year?

Notes:

“He Has Done Great Things for Me”

December 9

And Mary said:

“My soul magnifies the Lord,
And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior.
For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant....
He who is mighty has done great things for me,
And holy is His name.
He has shown strength with His arm;
He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.
He has put down the mighty from their thrones,
And exalted the lowly.
He has filled the hungry with good things....” (Luke 1)

The essential element in all adoration and all worship is humility. Without humility there can be no worship or adoration of the Lord, because what is divine and the Lord's cannot flow into a proud heart, that is, into a heart full of self-love (i.e., full of selfishness); for such a heart is hard and in the Word of God is called “a heart of stone.” It can flow only into a humble heart, since this is soft and in the Word is called “a heart of flesh.” Such a heart is receptive of goodness flowing in from the Lord. (*Secrets of Heaven* 9377)

In heaven people who know, acknowledge, and believe from the heart that they have no power from themselves, but that all the power they have is from the Lord, are said to be the least. And yet they are the greatest, because they have power from the Lord. (*Secrets of Heaven* 4459)

The more we are in a state of humility, the more we are in love, goodwill, and happiness. (*Secrets of Heaven* 1153.2)

Reflection: Mary's life had been blessed by the Lord in many ways, and she humbly gave testimony to that fact. What are one or two ways that the Lord has blessed your life in the past year? What are one or two challenges that He's helped you meet, or that He's currently helping you overcome? What are some of the good successes you've enjoyed at His hands? If your heart and soul could speak, what would they say to the Lord for these things?

Notes:

Do Things the Lord's Way

December 10

Now Elizabeth's full time came for her to be delivered, and she brought forth a son. When her neighbors and relatives heard how the Lord had shown great mercy to her, they rejoiced with her. So it was, on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him by the name of his father, Zacharias. His mother answered and said, "No; he shall be called John." But they said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." So they made signs to his father—what he would have him called. And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, saying, "His name is John." So they all marveled. Immediately his mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God. Then fear came on all who dwelt around them; and all these sayings were discussed throughout all the hill country of Judea. And all those who heard them kept them in their hearts, saying, "What kind of child will this be?" And the hand of the Lord was with him. (Luke 1)

For the outer part of us to be brought into true order, it must become subordinate to the inner, heavenly part; and it is subordinate when it obeys. To the extent that this happens, the outer part of us is also wise. This is what is meant when it is said that a person becomes a new creature. (*Secrets of Heaven* 9708)

The Lord desires our total submission, so that He can make us blissful and happy. That is, He doesn't want us to be partly our own person and partly His, for then there are two masters whom we cannot serve simultaneously. (*Secrets of Heaven* 6138.2)

The "good of faith" is a term that denotes everything of the Church that has to do with life and service, inspired by teachings of the Church that compose its faith. In short, the "good of faith" is everything that has to do with willing these things and doing them in a spirit of obedience. For the Church's truths of faith become, through people's willing them and doing them, forms of goodness. (*Secrets of Heaven* 9230)

Reflection: Zacharias' journey from doubt to praise culminated in his willingness to agree with Elizabeth (and ultimately with God) in naming the child John rather than Zacharias. When Zacharias fully and completely obeyed the Lord, his ability to speak was restored, and he praised God. Obedience requires us to submit our own will to the Lord's will. In doing this we actually lose something of ourselves—something of our old, self-oriented will. In place of it the Lord gives us a new selfhood and a new will. Our choices to obey are an exercise of that emerging new will, and they open us up to blessings from the Lord. What are one or two things you do simply because the Lord says to do them? What are one or two blessings you experience as a result?

Notes:

Be Good, Honest, and Fair

December 11

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." (Matthew 1)

Heavenly love consists in loving what is good, honest, and fair because it is good, honest, and fair; and in doing this from that love. Those who have this love have a life of goodness, honesty, and fairness. This is the heavenly life. (*Heaven and Hell* 481.1)

The Lord's presence with a person is in goodness, and therefore in what is just and fair, and further in what is honorable and becoming. These are the planes (or levels) in a person on which conscience is founded by the Lord, and consequently intelligence and wisdom. (*Secrets of Heaven* 2915)

All those are in the good of charity who have conscience, that is, who are unwilling to depart in any way from what is just and fair, good and true; and this for the very sake of what is just and fair, good and true. They think well of their neighbor and desire his or her welfare, even if he or she is an enemy; and this without any recompense or reward. (*Secrets of Heaven* 2380.2)

Reflection: Joseph has often been identified as a man of integrity—a paragon of virtue in the Christmas story. He was an honest and fair man; he conducted himself in honorable and becoming ways; he was mild, gentle, and patient—not prone to rash outbursts or reactive behavior. These things formed a context in which he could love Mary and put her needs before his own desires. Surely qualities like these are a foundation for good success—in both our spiritual and earthly lives. What is one area in your life in which you have tried to be like Joseph—honest and fair; gentle, patient, and kind? In what way(s) has this effort helped you in your work life or in relationships? How can you orient yourself toward others in just and fair ways this Christmas?

Notes:

A Will to Obey

December 12

Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus. (Matthew 1)

So that it may be living, truth which is the truth of faith must be introduced into the will so as to receive life there. For truth which issues merely from knowledge is not living, only truth which issues from the will. Life flows in from the Lord through the new will which He creates in a person. The life which comes first manifests itself in obedience, this being the first degree of the will. The life which comes second manifests itself as a *desire* to do what is true, this being a more advanced degree of the will. This is arrived at when delight and blessing are felt in doing what is true. Unless faith advances in this way, truth does not become truth but something separated from life. (*Secrets of Heaven* 3870.1, emphasis added)

The outer or earthly level in a person ought to serve the inner or spiritual level. In fact, the outer or earthly level is not anything unless it is a servant to the inner or spiritual; and to the extent that it does serve the inner level it is something. To be a servant is to be obedient; and the outer self is obedient when it complies with reason and the teachings of the Church. These teachings dictate that what is good and true should be done—not for selfish and worldly reasons, but for goodness and truth's own sake. When all of this is so, the Lord—acting through a person's inner, heavenly self—is the doer of these things. For all goodness and truth spring from the Lord, so much so that what is good and true in anyone *is* the Lord Himself. (*Secrets of Heaven* 9776, emphasis added)

Reflection: In the story of Christmas Joseph was obedient—he did what he was told at every turn. Obedience to truth is one of the baseline parts that we have to play in our own spiritual growth and development. It’s one part that we have to play in any genuinely good success that we enjoy. One of today’s readings says that obedience happens whenever a truth that we know is “introduced into our will” and becomes “living.” What do you think “truth being introduced into your will” means? How might this actually happen? What is one experience you’ve had of it recently? How can you, like Joseph, experience it today—as part of the evolving story of Christmas in your own life?

Notes:

Make a Daily Effort

December 13

And it came to pass in those days that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. So all went to be registered, everyone to his own city. Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed wife, who was with child. So it was, that while they were there, the days were completed for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2)

In the spiritual sense of the Word of God, “conceiving and bearing” stand for being regenerated. For a person who is being regenerated is conceived and born anew. Regeneration is for this reason called rebirth, but it is a spiritual rebirth. People are indeed born human beings from their parents, but they do not become truly human until they are born again of the Lord. (*Secrets of Heaven* 3860)

When a life of goodwill and faith is breathed into people by the Lord, they are made alive. They become spiritual and heavenly, and they are called “new creatures” from having been created anew. (*Secrets of Heaven* 780)

When people are being regenerated, they are then becoming [completely new people]. Therefore also, when they have been regenerated, they are called “born again” and “created anew.” Then, although they have a similar face and a similar speech, yet their mind is not similar. Their mind, when they are regenerate, is open toward heaven, where love of the Lord and goodwill toward the neighbor, together with faith, dwell. (*Secrets of Heaven* 3212)

Reflection: Joseph and Mary did what was expected of them: They dutifully went to Joseph's hometown to be registered. This allowed the story of Christmas to unfold as it should, with the Lord being born into the world and laid in a manger in Bethlehem of Judea. It's the same with us. As we dutifully put ourselves into the Lord's way—seeking truth from His Word and putting it to work in our daily lives, one foot in front of the other—the Lord is able to be born in us and to “rebirth” us into spiritual beings. How would you say your own spiritual journey has been like the travels of Joseph and Mary? Even if there have been bumps in the road, obstacles in the way, or significant challenges to face, what are one or two ways that you have dutifully continued forward, applying the truth that you know to your work life, home life, or relationships? What are one or two good things that have resulted from these efforts? In what way(s) have you become a new, different, better person? What is one way that you hope to continue this “journey to Bethlehem” in the coming year?

Notes:

Keep Watch and Discover What is Good

December 14

Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.” (Luke 2)

In the Word of God, “a shepherd” or one who pastures a flock symbolizes one who teaches and leads to what is good flowing from goodwill; “a watchman with God” symbolizes an understanding of the Word; and “night” symbolizes obscurity—a time when there is no longer any spiritual truth—also the final period of the old Church—either collectively or within an individual—and the first period of the new. (*Secrets of Heaven* 4713; 6000.1, 4, 6; 2353; *Apocalypse Explained* 624.12)

It is written: “Watchman, what of the night? what of the night? The watchman said, ‘The morning comes, and also the night’” (Isaiah 21:11-12). In the spiritual sense of the Word a “watchman” symbolizes one who observes the states of the Church and its changes, thus every prophet; “night” symbolizes the last state of the Church; and “morning” symbolizes its first state. (*Secrets of Heaven* 10134.11)

[Within the context of human society and relationships we read:] It is important for civil officers to keep watch and to see to it that order exists and is preserved in collective society. It is also important for married partners to do the same thing in their individual society. (*Married Love*, aka *Conjugal Love*, 283)

Reflection: One of the things that is true about the spiritual successes we enjoy is that they require us to keep watch. We must keep watch for spiritual enemies lurking in the shadows that would have us harm the people or things we care about most. The shepherds were up to that task. They kept watch over their flock by night. And they did this from a love they had for that flock. It's the same with us. A truly successful spirit is one of goodwill, kindness, and charity. It's a spirit that is willing and even happy to keep watch and on guard against spiritually hostile forces. What are one or two ways that you have "kept watch over the flock" during the past year? How has this led to good outcomes in your life and/or relationships? What is one thing you hope to "find" or experience this Christmas (similar to the shepherds finding the Babe) that you haven't "found" before, or that you haven't found as fully as you might like? What can you do to continue "finding" this same thing in the coming year?

Notes:

The Lord and People: Top Priorities in Life

December 15

And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glorify to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward all!” (Luke 2)

Some people say that heavenly joy consists in simply praising and blessing the Lord without performing good deeds from a spirit of goodwill, and that this is an active life. They are told, however, that praising and blessing the Lord does not *constitute* such an active life, but is the *outgrowth* of that life, for the Lord has no need of any praises. They are also told that the Lord wants people to do good deeds from a spirit of goodwill, and that in accordance with these they receive happiness. (*Secrets of Heaven* 456, emphasis added)

Spiritual power is to will the good of another, and to wish to convey to another as far as possible what is with oneself. (*Apocalypse Explained* 79)

Heaven consists in desiring from the heart the good of others more than one's own, and in serving others with a view to their happiness, not with reward as a goal, but from love. (*Heaven and Hell* 408)

Nothing is more pleasing to one who loves anyone, and who believes anyone, than to will and do what the other wills and thinks; for it is his or her sole desire to know the other person's will and thought, thus their good pleasure. (*Secrets of Heaven* 10143.5)

Reflection: The dual message of the angels---“Glory to God in the highest” and “goodwill toward all”—remind us of the two great commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself.” “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets”...and all good success! What are one or two ways that you can have the Lord as your highest priority today? And what are one or two ways that you can put your neighbor—your spouse, children, relatives, friends, associates, or the little old lady at the corner drug store—next in line of importance? How can you orient yourself toward each of these values in the coming year?

Notes:

Find Spiritual Success

December 16

And so it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, "Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. (Luke 2)

To the extent that we love the truth, to the same extent we desire to know it, and to the same extent we are affected at heart when we find it. No one else comes into wisdom. (*Doctrine of Life* 89)

While people are being regenerated, they have an affection for truth because they are intent on becoming intelligent. But once they have *become* regenerated they are intent on becoming wise. In other words, in the former state they have an affection for truth from a concern for doctrine, but in the subsequent state from a concern for life. (*Secrets of Heaven* 6247, emphasis added)

People who are being regenerated are gradually led away from a more remote or morally correct life to one that comes closer to matters of doctrine that are divine. In other words, they are led closer to a spiritual life. (*Secrets of Heaven* 3690.4)

Reflection: One of the things that was true of the shepherds is that they cared about their flock. Our reading from Scripture today makes it clear that they also cared about finding Mary, Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger. Our readings also suggest that people who love the truth, especially for the sake of life, will eventually find it; and that they will be led by the Lord to a more and more spiritual life. What has been your experience of this over the course of your lifetime? What are one or two things that you've cared about most and earnestly tended to? How has the Lord led you to discover new truth and to richer experiences of life and relationships? How would you summarize one "good success" that you've enjoyed as a result of these things? How can you carry that success forward into the new year?

Notes:

Zealously Extend and Perfect the Lord's Church

December 17

Now when they had seen Him, they made widely known the saying which was told them concerning this Child.

And all those who heard it marveled at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told them. (Luke 2)

The Lord, from divine love and divine zeal, calls together all who are in a spiritual affection for truth, and who think about heaven, to the New Church;* also to union with Himself, and thus to eternal life. (*Apocalypse Revealed* 831)

In the Word of God, “rejoicing” relates to salvation and the consequent joy of those who become spiritual by the reception of divine truth. (*Apocalypse Explained* 751)

With a church that begins from worship of the Lord, and from love toward Him, there is a zeal that prevails to extend and perfect the Church by means of the holy goods and truths of heaven. (*Apocalypse Explained* 650.33)

Evangelization is annunciation about the Lord, His coming, and the things that are from Him which belong to salvation and eternal life. (*Secrets of Heaven* 9925.2)

*Note: In the theological writings of Emanuel Swedenborg, “the New Church” does not refer to a church organization, but rather, to people throughout the world who pattern their lives after genuine truths of faith. (See *True Christianity* 307-308.)

Reflection: The shepherds went out and spread the good news of the Lord's birth. Then they returned to their homes "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen." These things remind us of a call that each one of us has to be united with the Lord, a sense of joy when spiritual realities find their way into our lives, and a passion we can feel to extend these things to other people around us—helping them to improve their spiritual lives, and helping make the world a better place. What is one way that you've experienced any of these things in your walk with the Lord over the past year? What are one or two ways that you enjoy sharing who you are and what you know with others, helping to "extend and perfect" the Lord's spiritual church on earth? What is one way that you can do this as Christmas day approaches?

Notes:

Wait Patiently for Good Things

December 18

Now when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord and to offer a sacrifice. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. (Luke 2)

It is written: "Here is the patience and the faith of the saints." In this scripture the phrase, "patience of the saints," refers to the spiritual conflicts (temptations) of the faithful, or of those who are made spiritual by the Lord. The reason for this is that "patience" means spiritual patience, which is patience in sustaining spiritual conflicts. (*Apocalypse Explained* 813)

As to temptations, which are meant in the Word by "patience," they are spiritual combats which people undergo who receive genuine charity from the Lord (genuine charity being goodwill that shows itself in good actions). (*Apocalypse Explained* 893.3)

When we are in a state of love or heavenly desire, we are in an angelic state, that is to say, as if not in time, provided there is no impatience in the desire. For impatience is a bodily urge, and to the extent that we are in it, so far we are in time. But to the extent that we are *not* in it, to the same extent we are not in time. We are withdrawn from bodily and worldly things by means of desire belonging to genuine love. For our mind is then elevated toward heaven, and it is thus withdrawn from the things of time. (*Secrets of Heaven* 3827, emphasis added)

In your patience possess your souls. (Luke 21:19)

Reflection: Good things take time and patience. Spiritual rebirth, for example, is a process that can't be hurried; the growth of friendships and relationships is slow and seasonal—like the growth of a tree; and any good thing we hope to accomplishment takes time. There are also challenges along the way—obstacles to the things we most long for, conflicting feelings and thoughts within us, personal weaknesses that threaten to short circuit our best efforts, etc. What is your experience of facing these kinds of challenges, as you patiently wait for each new birth of the Lord in your life? How can you be like Simeon this Christmas season—as you wait patiently for the sense of comfort and reassurance that can follow challenging times?

Notes:

My Eyes Have Seen Your Salvation: A Will to Act

December 19

And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, Simeon took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel." (Luke 2)

Simeon of the Old Testament received his name from the phrase "Jehovah has heard." In the Word of God, "hearing the Lord" stands for possessing faith in Him, obeying His commandments, and so possessing a will of faith, a will which is received from the Lord. People who possess faith that is part of the will receive life. (*Secrets of Heaven* 3869.1, 4)

The Lord fashions a new will in people, and this exists as a will to act in accord with the truth they've absorbed from the teachings of their church. And when they will and do that truth, it becomes goodness residing with them. (*Secrets of Heaven* 8521.2)

People are not in heaven until they have come into a state in which the Lord leads them by means of goodness. By "goodness" is meant the good of life. The good of life consists in the performance of what is good based in a *will* for what is good. (*Secrets of Heaven* 9832, emphasis added)

Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, and I will keep it to the end. (Psalm 119:33)

Reflection: It is written: “Then I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 11:19). This is talking about a new heart that the Lord can give us at Christmastime and each day of the year. It’s a new heart and a new will—new willingness, new energy, new motivation, a new zest for life, etc. It is the spiritual “Simeon” in each one of us, and it has a wonderful power from the Lord. It is the underlying basis of all genuine “going forward” in life and in all good success. What has been your experience of “willing” your faith (i.e., having “a will of faith”) in the past year? What is it today? What will it be in the coming year?

Notes:

Pray for Good Things in Life

December 20

Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, of the tribe of Asher, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord. (Luke 2)

Regarded in itself prayer is talking with God, and at the same time some inner view of the things that are being prayed for. Answering to this there is something akin to an influx into the perception or thought of a person's mind, which effects a certain opening of their inner parts toward God. But the experience varies according to a person's state of mind and according to the essence of whatever is being prayed for. If the prayer springs from love and faith, and if they are completely heavenly and spiritual things about which and for which the person prays, something like a revelation is present within the prayer.... (*Secrets of Heaven* 2535)

Whenever the Church is engaged in anything holy, it prays that God may be present, giving guidance to thought and speech. Consequently, when people are engaged in true worship, the Lord flows into the forms of goodness and also the truths that are present with them and raises them (the forms of goodness and the truths) toward Himself. He also raises the person along with them, and He does this in the measure and degree that the person is governed by these things. (*Secrets of Heaven* 10299.2)

Reflection: Among other things that Anna did, she served God with fastings and prayers. Prayer is a powerful way to connect with the Lord and seek His help and guidance. And when the Lord answers our prayers—offering us new insights, new ways of perceiving people and situations in our lives, and new ways of behaving—these things help us move forward and accomplish the things we most want to accomplish. What is your experience of prayer? How does it help lead to good success in your life? What is one such success that you've enjoyed following prayer to the Lord? What is one prayer that you have this Christmas?

Notes:

“We Have Come to Worship Him”: Live from the Lord and with Him

December 21

Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, “Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.” (Matthew 2)

There is a love of ruling arising from love of the neighbor, and a love of ruling arising from self-centered love. Those who are in the love of ruling from love of the neighbor seek dominion to the end that they may perform useful services to the public and to individuals. To such, therefore, dominion is entrusted in the heavens. Emperors, kings, and noblemen who have been born and brought up to positions of authority, if they humble themselves before God, can be in this love. (*True Christianity* 405)

The words of Scripture, “to follow the Lord,” have a similar meaning as “to go after Him” or “to walk after Him.” “To go or walk after the Lord” means to acknowledge, obey, act, and live from Him and with Him. (*Apocalypse Explained* 864.1-2)

In the Word of God “a star” symbolizes knowledge of internal goodness and truth that comes from the Lord. “Travels” stand for further developments of spiritual life. The life of heaven consists in being led by the Lord through what is good. If people are to attain that life, goodness must be implanted by means of truth. As long as this is being done, they are on the road to heaven. (*Secrets of Heaven* 9293.3, 8559)

Reflection: Imagine what your life would be like if you lived “from the Lord and with the Lord” in things you did, things you said, decisions you made, and interactions you engaged in. On a symbolic level this is the kind of life that the wise men were seeking; this is what they were determined to find; and this is what worshipping the Lord is all about. What does this idea of acting “from the Lord and with the Lord” mean to you? How (in general) could you achieve it? What is one thing you could do today—just a few days before Christmas—to experience it?

Notes:

Make Gradual Progress

December 22

Then Herod, when he had secretly called the wise men, determined from them what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search carefully for the young Child, and when you have found Him, bring back word to me, that I may come and worship Him also." When they heard the king, they departed; and behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, till it came and stood over where the young Child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy. (Matthew 2)

Because a person's own self is of a fallen nature, therefore the Lord, from His divine mercy, has provided the means by which people may be withdrawn from what is their own. These means are furnished in the Word of God. And when people act in accordance with them, that is, when they think and speak, will and act, from the divine Word, then they are kept by the Lord in divine things, and thus are withheld from their own self. And as they persevere in this course, a new self—which is completely separate from their old self—is formed in them by the Lord. In this way they become as it were created anew. (*Apocalypse Explained* 585.2-3)

Union of a person with the Lord is a reciprocal union, that is, the Lord is in a person and a person in the Lord. And because it is reciprocal, it necessarily follows that people ought to join themselves to the Lord in order that the Lord may join Himself to them. In order that such reciprocal union may exist, freedom of choice is granted to us, which gives us the ability to walk in the way to heaven or in the way to hell. Our ability to reciprocate flows from this freedom of choice, and it enables us to join ourselves to the Lord. (*True Christianity* 371)

No type of love can ever become pure in human beings, nor in angels. But because the Lord primarily regards the intention that is in their will, therefore, to the extent that they have an intention and persevere in it, to the same extent they are introduced into the purity and holiness of love, and gradually make progress in it. (*Married Love, aka Conjugal Love* 71:1-2)

Reflection: The journey of the wise men took time. They followed a star; they traveled to Jerusalem; and from there they made their way to Bethlehem where they found the infant Lord. Spiritual progress takes time too. It doesn't happen all at once. Instead, it's often the result of many efforts we make to learn the Lord's teachings and put them to work in our lives. We're guided by a star; we encounter "king Herod" in different forms along the way; we depart from him and we stay on course—following our deepest hopes and dreams. And we make progress—little by little. What progress have you made in the past year? What are one or two ways that the Lord has led you and kept you on course? Where is your life headed right now? Where do you want it to be headed? What progress do you hope to make in the coming year?

Notes:

Compel Yourself to Good Success

December 23

And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. (Matthew 2)

When real humility is present in people, they surrender all power to think or do anything by themselves and abandon themselves completely to the Divine, and in this condition they draw near to the Divine. (*Secrets of Heaven* 6866)

Humility before a *person* produces a bowing down, according to the estimation of him or her; but in presence of the Divine it produces total prostration, especially when people think that the Divine in respect to power and wisdom is everything, and their own self in comparison is nothing. When they are in this acknowledgment from the heart, they come as it were out of themselves, and thence fall on their faces. And when they are thus out of themselves, they are also *removed* from their own selves.... When their own self is removed, the Divine fills them and raises them up. (*Apocalypse Explained* 77.1, emphasis added)

The angel of the Lord said to Hagar, “Return yourself to your mistress and humble yourself beneath her hands” (Gen. 16:9). In the original language “humbling oneself” is expressed by a word which means to fling down. “Flinging oneself down” means compelling oneself to do what is good, to obey what the Lord has commanded, and to speak what is true, that is, to submit oneself beneath the controlling power of divine goodness and truth. The secret lying within this is that in so doing people have a heavenly self bestowed on them from the Lord. (*Secrets of Heaven* 1937.1, 3, 6)

Reflection: There are a number of ideas connected with the scriptural reading for today—surrendering ourselves to the Lord, abandoning ourselves to Him, acknowledging that He is everything and that we by comparison are nothing, and falling on our faces before Him in humility until He raises us up. In addition, our readings include the idea of compelling ourselves to do what is good, obeying what the Lord tells us, and saying what is true. Isn't it interesting: Part of good success is compelling ourselves to it. Can you remember a time when you "compelled" yourself toward good success? What was your experience of that? What thoughts or emotions did you experience along the way? How can you do more of it today—just two days before Christmas?

Notes:

Gifts from the Heart

December 24

And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2)

In ancient times gifts were presented to kings when people went to them. This was a customary and holy practice symbolizing introduction. So too, the wise men from the east brought gifts to the Lord just born. These outward gifts symbolized inward or spiritual gifts, namely, things of love and faithfulness which are offered to the Lord from the heart, and which are accepted by Him. By these things union (or togetherness) is effected. (*Secrets of Heaven* 4262.3, 9293.1, *Apocalypse Explained* 661)

In the heavens there is a sharing of all with each and of each with all. Such sharing goes forth from the two loves of heaven, which are love of the Lord and love of our neighbor. Love of the Lord is such because the Lord's love is a love of sharing everything it has with all, since it wills the happiness of all. There is a like love in everyone who loves the Lord, because the Lord is in them. From this comes the mutual sharing of the delights of angels with one another. (*Heaven and Hell* 399)

Reflection: One of the main reasons why the Lord was born on earth, and one of the main reasons He wants to be born into our lives, is that we might experience His love and goodness on all levels of our being. The Lord also hopes that His goodness will, by our choosing, extend itself through us to others. In this way there is a sharing of our gifts, talents, and “good successes” with them. In addition, each “gift” that we give ends up circling back to the Lord—it is ultimately a gift to Him. This is where real joy in life is experienced—in giving tangible “gifts” from the heart to others and ultimately to the Lord. What are one or two of the most meaningful gifts that the Lord has given to you over the past year? In what way(s) have you been able to pass any of these gifts on to others—helping them in their spiritual lives and helping make the world a better place? What is one gift that you could give to someone else (and ultimately to the Lord) today—the day before Christmas?

Notes:

Together with the Lord and People: The “Divine from the Lord” in Everyday Life

December 25

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of all people. That was the true Light which gives light to everyone coming into the world. And as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of human-kind, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1)

Let us consider what divine mercy is. Divine mercy is pure mercy toward the whole human race, to save it. It is also unceasing toward every person. And it is never withdrawn from anyone, so that everyone is saved who can be saved. And yet no one can be saved except by divine means, which means the Lord reveals in the Word. The divine means are what are called divine truths, which teach how a person must live in order to be saved. By means of these truths the Lord leads people to heaven, and by means of them He implants the life of heaven in them. (*Heaven and Hell* 522)

The Lord’s Word is a covenant or joining together. The reason for this is that the Word is the Divine from the Lord, thus it is the Lord Himself. This being so, when the Word is received by people, the Lord Himself is received—as we read in John: “If anyone loves Me, they will keep My word; and My Father will love them, and We will come to them and make Our home with them” (John 14:23). (*Secrets of Heaven* 9396.9)

The Word of God is the means by which the Lord’s presence among people and togetherness with Him is achieved. The reason for this is that the Word unites people to heaven and through heaven to the Lord. For the Word is divine truth emanating from the Lord. Therefore, those who adhere to that truth in doctrine and life, or in faith and love, adhere to what is divine emanating from the Lord, and in so doing they are united to Him. (*Secrets of Heaven* 9378.2)

Reflection: Our reading from Scripture today—Christmas morning—reminds us that all things are made by the Lord, and that creation happens by means of the goodness and truth of His Word. This brings us full circle to the story of Joshua, when the Lord said, “This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Joshua 1:8). Isn’t this what our readings for today are saying as well? The Lord gives us His Word. It’s like a mine holding rich veins of gold and silver, love and wisdom, goodness and truth. And “good success”—the very best kind of success—can be had when we open it up, learn from it, and apply what we learn to the decisions and actions of our lives. In this way we become united with heaven, with other people, and ultimately with the Lord Himself. By means of it we enjoy the ultimate success—eternal salvation. Not that we can take credit for any experience of salvation, but that salvation truly is the final “good success” that the Lord offers us, as we humbly co-operate with Him along the way. What has your relationship with the Lord’s Word been like as you’ve grown up? What has it been over the past year and during this Christmas season? What are one or two good things it has helped you accomplish? And what promise does it hold for your future? The Lord’s promise is clear: If you will meditate in His Word day and night, and if you will observe to do all that is written in it, then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. All good wishes to you in these things.

Notes:

**Merry Christmas, everyone,
from your friends in the Glenview New Church.**

(Continued)

Additional Notes

Additional Prayers



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