

# CHRISTMAS 2023



The drawing by John Capelain

# "I CROSSED YOUR PATH"

On this starry Christmas night, where magic lingers in the air and divine light embraces the earth, a saintly wanderer named Benedict Joseph Labre humbly roamed the streets of a small village. His silhouette was accentuated by the glow of twinkling decorations and the comforting calm of the night. As he gazed upon an illuminated nativity scene in the village square, a soft yet powerful voice resonated in the air.

- "Benedict Joseph Labre, approach, my child."

The saintly wanderer looked up to the starry sky, sensing a divine presence.

- "Lord, is it you addressing me on this holy night?"

- "Yes, Benedict Joseph, it is I," replied the heavenly voice.

- "I have observed you, my dear wanderer, and I have seen the simplicity of your heart, the purity of your faith. You walk among men carrying the burden of poverty on your shoulders, but your soul radiates a wealth far greater."

Benedict Joseph humbly knelt in the fresh snow, his eyes filled with wonder.

- "Lord, I am but a simple pilgrim, a wanderer of faith. How can I be worthy of your attention on this holy night?"

God smiled with love.

- "My dear Benedict Joseph, you have come to me with an open heart, without pretension or expectation. In that lies your greatness. Today, I wish to reward you for your unwavering faith."

A golden light enveloped the saintly wanderer, and a celestial energy filled the atmosphere. Visions of past, present, and future moments in Benedict Joseph's life unfolded before him.

- "Your life as a wanderer, your modesty and charity, even in the shadow of indifference, have touched the hearts of those you have encountered on your journey. Today, I give you the opportunity to share a message of love, a sincere prayer that will warm hearts on this holy night."

Benedict Joseph felt a divine inspiration coursing through him.

- "Lord, I am honored to carry this message. What can I offer that is more humble and sincere on this sacred night?"

- "Write a prayer, Benedict Joseph, a supplication for humanity. Let every word be infused with the tenderness of your pilgrim heart, and may this prayer become a light in the darkness, a star guiding souls towards love and compassion."

The wanderer stood up with determination, feeling the presence of God guiding him in this sacred mission. He headed towards the nativity scene, knelt down, took out a worn-out quill and a piece of cloth-paper from his pouch. The words he penned were imbued with the tenderness of his faith, a humble plea where he poured out his fiery heart.

Oh, divine Child of the manger,

On this starry night, where the magic of nativity envelops the earth, I stand before you, Lord, bearing the tatters of my pilgrim's life.

As the icy wind sweeps through the alleys, may my prayer resound like a gentle breeze, bringing warmth and comfort to hearts in need. 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's,' your word said, Lord.

On this holy night, I lay before you, O divine Child, all the tensions of the world, all the quarrels and divisions that stir minds.

May this prayer be an offering for peace, a humble call for unity beyond differences. May the light of your birth illuminate the dark paths where indifference reigns, and may your love transcend the boundaries drawn by humanity.

May hearts open to mutual understanding, and may each act be guided by the wisdom of your words. On this night when the world celebrates the coming of the Redeemer, I entrust to you the burdens of humanity. May my tears, symbols of my prayer, become a beneficent rain, washing away sorrows and spreading love on this earth.

May each, like the magi guided by the star, find the path of truth and compassion. May my humble existence, Lord, become a living testimony for hardened hearts, an illustration of the wisdom of your word.

May each step, even in the solitude of my prayer, be a walk towards you, the Emmanuel who comes to dwell among us. May this Christmas night become a radiant testimony to the magic of simplicity and the infinite grace emanating from you, divine Child Jesus.

May this prayer, traced by my weathered hand, be a light illuminating the darkness, reminding all that, even in poverty, generosity and care for others can become precious jewels offered to humanity.

Amen.

When he finished, the saintly wanderer placed the prayer he had written at God's request before the cradle of the infant Jesus. Then he opened his hands, saying:

- "Before you, O Savior of the world".

- "I entrust to you this burden of tears that the world has imposed on me to bear before you. May this prayer not be in vain, but may it resonate with what I wanted to give as a testimony of your love, persisting even in the arid indifference of this world."

A couple, Anne Marie and John, residents of the village passing by, had witnessed the entire scene and had observed with astonishment as Benedict Joseph Labre placed the written prayer before the cradle of the nativity scene. Intrigued by the special light emanating from this humble pilgrim, they approached gently to read the prayer.

- "Excuse us, good sir. We saw what you did, and curiosity got the better of us. Could you explain the prayer you placed there?" asked John, with a warm smile.

Benedict Joseph Labre, welcoming the couple with kindness, consented to share the profound meaning of his prayer.

- "Certainly, my friends. Tonight, God himself asked me to write this humble supplication. It is a prayer for humanity, a humble request for love and compassion to fill our hearts on this holy night."

The couple sat with respect, captivated by the spiritual aura of the wanderer.

Benedict Joseph took the prayer between his weathered hands, reading each word with an intensity that seemed to transcend ordinary language.

- *"You see, my friends, this prayer is a call to universal love, to mutual understanding among men. It implies that, even in the diversity of our lives, we can find the essential: to love, as Christ loved us."*

Anne Marie, her eyes shining with wonder, asked:

- *"But what does this phrase 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's' mean that you introduced?"*

Benedict Joseph smiled gently,

- *"It's a phrase taken from the teachings of Jesus. It reminds us to give each dimension of our life its due, to respect the laws of earthly authorities, but also to dedicate our hearts and lives to God without opposing the two".*

- *In this phrase, divine love and love for our fellow beings are presented as two sides of the same coin."*

Anne Marie and John listened attentively, absorbing every word of the saintly wanderer's teachings. The prayer resonated in their hearts, illuminating their understanding of the true meaning of Christmas.

As the conversation continued, something wonderful happened. The lights of the nativity scene seemed to shine more brightly, and a gentle melody filled the air. It was the melodious song of angels; the spirit of Christmas had come to life. The faces of Benedict Joseph, Anne Marie, and John radiated with the shared joy of this moment.

Together, they began to sing Christmas carols, carrying in their hearts the light of divine love. And thus, in the quiet of the night, surrounded by the magic of Christmas, a simple act of sharing had woven invisible bonds between these souls, creating a chain of love that would endure beyond this particular night.

By placing at God's request his humble prayer before the cradle, Benedict Joseph Labre had sown a seed of love and hope, transforming this Christmas night into an unforgettable experience for Anne Marie and John and all those who were later touched by the generosity of the saintly Pilgrim. And in this small community of the heart, the magic of Christmas manifested in every shared smile, every note of music that wafted through the air, confirming that divine love was the most beautiful melody of all. And the magic of this special night persisted, transcending time and space, for love, once shared, remains eternal.

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## BROTHER ALEXIS'S CHRISTMAS NOTE

Dear friends,  
Dear brothers and sisters,

**A** long time ago in Amettes, I crossed his path, an encounter that engraved its indelible mark in the book of my life as a Laverite brother. I give thanks to Saint Benedict Joseph Labre, the benevolent Father of our Laverite community, for inspiring me with this story imbued with the enchanting spirit of Christmas.

Through his kindness and words of wisdom, Benedict Joseph Labre manages to demonstrate that God watches over each of us at every moment. He invites us to listen to the divine voice that speaks to everyone continually, to marvel at it, and to encourage us to remake a world of love and kindness. On this holy night when Emmanuel, God with us, descends into this world for us all, we have the opportunity to be worthy of his attention.

In this festive season, we hold the power to express this reality through our actions, our efforts, our commitments, our encouragements, and the attention we must give to others. The holy wanderer embodies the one who offers his love and friendship without limits through a simple prayer, going all the way to fulfill God's will, and this tale is its symbol.

Dear friends, dear brothers and sisters, the birth of Jesus is not a fable; it unfolded concretely on the land of Israel in Bethlehem, in Judea, during the time of King Herod" (Mt 2, 1). Christmas is the celebration of God's encounter with us, in Jesus.

May this story, woven with kindness and sharing, warm our hearts.

May we, like Saint Labre, be artisans of peace, generosity, spreading the light and love that emanate from this celestial encounter.

Merry Christmas to all, in the sweet communion of our hearts illuminated by divine grace.

May the spirit of Christmas continue to guide us, to spread peace and joy in our lives, and to make every day a celebration of divine love.

Brother Alexis, fl  
From Boulogne-sur-Mer on December 9, 2023,

Merry Christmas to All !