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18 Thursday

THURSDAY, 18<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER

Jeremiah 23: 5-8

Ps 71

Matt 1: 18-24

“His name will be called Emmanuel, which means God is with us”. The verse is from today’s reading of St Matthew’s gospel, quoting a prophecy of Isaiah; and it’s also the verse for the Communion Antiphon of this day’s Mass. “Emmanuel” is, too, one of those messianic titles of Jesus which the church uses in evening prayer this week before Christmas (on the 23<sup>rd</sup>), in a longing appeal for Him to come. It’s maybe the most intimate and comforting of all the great titles we use for Jesus in honouring Him. It reminds us of who the Bethlehem child really is, the huge mystery of God becoming a human being just like all of us. That God is really with us in our earthly, limited, fragile human life is something amazing but also consoling, healing and uplifting. But Emmanuel was not the name that Joseph gave to Mary’s child; he was told to call Him Jesus, for the meaning of that name is that this child would be “the one who is to save his people from their sins”. Our Emmanuel is our Saviour. Christmas is about our Saviour’s coming, God being with us in our needs and our struggles to heal us, and sharing our humanness in order to bring us to share His fullness of life. May my celebration of Christmas this year bring healing and hope, as well as true joy, not only to me but through me to other people who long for release and healing from so many anxieties, pressures, questions, problems and the sinfulness within and around us. O Come, Emmanuel, God-with-us, and bring your peace and salvation to us this Christmastime.

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