

**Reflection on the Gospel-Christmas Year B**  
**(Luke 2:1-14)**

-Veronica Lawson RSM

The readings for the Christmas liturgies vary from celebration to celebration. The gospel for Midnight Mass (Lk 2:1-14) comes from the great story-teller Luke, as does the gospel for the early morning Mass (Lk 2:15-20). Luke tells us that Jesus was born into the world of the Roman Empire during the reign of Caesar Augustus. In his lifetime, Augustus was acclaimed by the people as saviour of the world, son of God, and bringer of peace. Luke's communities at the end of the first century would have known about the achievements and reputation of Caesar Augustus. These early Christians would have recognised in Luke's story of the birth of Jesus a very deliberate attempt to proclaim Jesus, rather than Caesar Augustus, as the face of God, as saviour of the world, and as bringer of the good news of peace.

Luke is a master storyteller. He weaves, from Israel's sacred history and from what he knows about Jesus' origins, a wonderful tapestry of life and hope for the world, a tapestry that unites heavenly, human and diverse companion species in one great act of praise. The violence that brought "peace" to the Roman Empire has no place in this scene. The peace that comes with the birth of Christ is the deep peace of non-violence and reconciliation, an all-embracing peace "among those whom God favours" (2:14). It is a peace that satisfies the longings of the human heart and the well-being of the whole Earth community

The peace of which the gospel speaks will only be realised in our world, it seems to me, when each and every one of us lets go of any vestige of resentment or unproductive anger in our own hearts and when we learn to live in harmony with and respect for all Earth's beings. The violence of war and the power/resource imbalance are two sides of the one coin. As the gap between rich and poor widens and unprecedented power is vested in the mega-rich, the resentment of those deprived of power and/or access to even the most basic of life's necessities can find expression in violence. As we celebrate the birth of Christ, the bringer of peace, we might reflect on the causes of violence in order to expand our capacities to hear the cry of the poor in our world and respond in ways that make for peace.