

## **Homily For Christmas Day (Mass at Dawn) - Year A St Peter's 8:00/9:30 AM Masses, December 25, 2022**

**Isaiah 62:11-12** "Your salvation comes. You shall be called 'The Holy People', the redeemed of the Lord."

**Psalms 97:1-12** "A light will shine on us this day. The Lord is born for us. Let the earth rejoice."

**Titus 3:4-7** "Our Saviour appeared, saving us through water of rebirth, and renewal by the Holy Spirit."

**Luke 2:15-20** "They went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger."

### **Go and See Him This Day**

#### **Introduction**

Welcome to all of you at this great feast of the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Welcome to you if you have been preparing through Advent, at home and at mass. Welcome also if you have made the special effort to come to mass at this time, maybe with family or friends or maybe on your own. Whatever your reason for being here. Welcome, welcome, welcome!

Hopefully, no husbands got their wives a vacuum cleaner or a frying pan for Christmas. If you did, you are welcome to stay here and pray for forgiveness the rest of the day. The priests will hear your confession. If you got tools for your husband or father, that will be one of the great acts of love you could do.

Santa Claus is still pretty important to a lot of people on this day. What do you call people who are afraid of Santa Claus? Claustrophobic, of course. Why was Santa's little helper depressed? Because he had low elf esteem. What do you call Santa when he stops moving? Santa Pause. The four stages of life: you believe in Santa Claus, you don't believe in Santa Claus, you are Santa Claus, you look like Santa Claus. The Fourth Century Bishop, St. Nicholas, is a model of how Christians are meant to live. Guess what? St. Nicholas put the birth of Jesus Christ at the center of his life, his care for the poor, his gift giving, and his entire existence.

Whatever you think about Santa, Jesus is real. He was born and lived. There is better evidence for birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus than there is for Julius Caesar or any ancient figure. Four Gospels and many other accounts all

written in the lifetime of those who knew him, tell of the same events. Christmas Day and the Christmas season celebrates the birth of Jesus and the ways he showed us the presence of God among us. For the Church, only the Easter celebration of the Lord's death and rising is more important.

Johnny was in Grade Two when his class was preparing for their First Communion. The pastor came for a visit and was thinking of what kind of questions to ask to test their knowledge of the sacrament. So he started like this: "Children, where is Jesus? Then he looked at little Johnny hiding his face: Johnny, can you tell me where Jesus is? Johnny looked frightened and didn't open his mouth, so Father asked him again: Come on Johnny, tell me, where is Jesus? Looking more terrified, Johnny just shrunk into his seat a little further. One more time, Father said to him, I think you know the answer to where Jesus is. At that moment, Johnny bolted out of his seat, ran out of the room knocking over his books, went straight out of the school and didn't stop for the two blocks to his home, ran inside past his mother and up to his room. His mother rushed after him and, opening the door to his closet, she asked, Johnny what's wrong? Starting to cry, he blurted out, "Jesus is missing and the priest thinks I took him!"

### **Why a baby?**

Well today is the day when we celebrate knowing exactly where Jesus was around two thousand years ago. St. Francis made popular the manger scene that we so identify with the events told in the Gospels. That was in the 13th Century. In so doing, that greatest of saints helps us to focus on this part of the story. Jesus is God, who came to us as a baby. That event was so significant in history that angels announced it to some simple shepherds in a field, telling them where to go so they would know where Jesus is. But why a baby?

Many great people we appreciate what they did as adults, and some of those we celebrate their birthdays. But I can't think of anyone who we celebrate as a baby. So Jesus is different in that way. We celebrate the very fact that God, who created everything, then decided to become part of what he created. Now that seems weird, because it IS weird. Christianity is the religion that tells us God did this for

one reason. It was not for himself but so he could share his life - his divine life - with us.

God can seem mysterious and unknowable. We might even be afraid of so great a God. So what does he do? He comes to us in our most vulnerable state, as a baby, born to a poor family. Then he announces that birth first to some of the least significant people in that society. Angels appear. Light pierces the darkness. The shepherds receive a revelation from heaven that a child is born.

## **Isaiah**

But this story doesn't come out of nowhere. The prophet Isaiah foretold the very thing we are celebrating. Along with many other prophecies, we see for the only time in human history that the founder of a great religion is foretold. All kinds of fictional movies and stories tell of prophecies about the coming of a great figure. They are all modelled on the actual story of a people whom God kept showing what was going to happen. "A child will be born. Authority rests upon his shoulders and he will be named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. He will save his people. He will be Emmanuel, God-with-us, God's gift of love made visible.

## **Gospel**

In the Charlie Brown Christmas cartoon special, Charlie Brown yells out a question in frustration: "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?" Poor Charlie can't kick his blues. His dog, Snoopy is all about the lights. His sister, Sally is trapped in the desire for things: All I want is what I have coming to me. All I want is my fair share. But little Linus has the answer to Charlie's question: "Sure, Charlie Brown, I can tell you what Christmas is all about: "There were some shepherds in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And the angel of the Lord came to them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were afraid. But the angel said to them: "Do not be afraid for I bring you news of great joy for all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign to you: You shall find the baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." And suddenly there was

with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward people." Shepherds are far removed from the elite in Jerusalem. The shepherds are even considered sinful and unclean. The Angels tell the shepherds in the field: even though you are least among people, God has come for you.

### **Room at the Inn?**

The fact that angels appear to shepherds to announce the Good News of the birth of Christ means the message is for all people, no matter who you are. It's you and me. It is personal. Christ has come for us. He has come in a low state, as a vulnerable child in a precarious situation to make it so that we will not be afraid to approach him in our vulnerable and precarious situations.

The shepherds felt so great a joy that they had to see it for themselves and went immediately to Bethlehem. Then they could not stop talking about: "All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds."

Jesus clothed Himself in our human condition, with our joys and our struggles. Jesus' love embraces all our fragile elements, takes them on and welcomes them with tenderness. If there is darkness somewhere in our life, some sadness or emptiness, Jesus Christ came to let us know we are not alone in that place.

There was no room at the inn for Mary to give birth to her child. But today, we can change that. We can invite the Christ child to be born into our hearts, to transform our lives, so that we might grow in joy and hope and courage and peace. Is there anyone here who doesn't need that? Christ could be born 1000 times in Bethlehem but all in vain until he is born in me.

The name 'Bethlehem' literally means 'House of bread'. This church houses the bread that becomes Jesus. Now he wants us to become a Bethlehem, a manger which contains the bread that is Jesus.

I invite all of us to consider the invitation to come more often to Christ's mass. Some have stayed away because of the fear of illness. Some may have lost the

sense of God in their life years ago. Maybe someone made you feel unwelcome. Maybe some of you have never really thought about how Jesus wants to have a personal relationship with you, to share his life with you.

This is Christmas, or Christ's mass. Today, your presence here helps to keep Christ in Christmas. But it also is a way to keep the mass in Christ. The same Jesus who was born in the place called the House of Bread invites each of us to make room in our hearts and our lives to become a Bethlehem, a house of Bread. God did this for each of us, so we would know that we matter and, once we have that in our hearts, so we would tell others.

Have a merry and most blessed Christmas.

## **Key Passages**

**Entrance Antiphon:** *Today a light will shine upon us, for the Lord is born for us, and he will be called Wondrous God, Prince of peace, and his reign will be without end.*

**Collect:** *Almighty God, grant that the light of faith, which illumines our minds, may also shine through in our deeds.*

**Isaiah:** *The Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: See, your salvation comes. His reward is with him, and his recompense before him. They shall be called 'The Holy People, the redeemed of the Lord.*

**Psalms:** *A light will shine on us this day. The Lord is born for us. The Lord is king. Let the earth rejoice. Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne. The heavens proclaim his righteousness, and all the peoples behold his glory. Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name.*

**Titus:** *When our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.*

**Luke:** *When the angels had left, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.*