

Homily For Christmas Day (Mass at Dawn)- Year C

St Peter's 8:00 AM Mass, December 25, 2018

Isaiah 62: 11-12 "See, your salvation comes, his reward is with him."

Psalms 97 "Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright of heart."

Titus 3: 4-7 "The Holy Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

Luke 2: 15-20 "The shepherds glorified and praised God for all they had heard and seen."

Introduction

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. The angels sing in joy: Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth. They tell shepherds in a field: "Today is born a saviour in the City of Bethlehem."

Welcome to all of you at this great feast of the celebration of the birth of 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 Christmas, with your family or on your own. Welcome 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 this day. What do you call people who are afraid of Santa Claus? Claustrophobic, of course. 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.

I worry about what it does to the faith of children when they find out that "Santa isn't real." But Jesus is real. The Christmas season celebrates the birth of the Lord Jesus and the ways he manifested the presence of God among us. For the Church, only the Easter celebration of the Lord's death and rising is more important than the Christmas season.

The Fourth Century Bishop of **Myra**, St. Nicholas is a model of how Christians are meant to live. Nicholas put the birth of Jesus Christ at the center of his life, his ministry, his entire existence.

Isaiah

Isaiah foretold that: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light ... a child has been born to us; authority rests upon his shoulders and he is named ... Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Psalm

A light will shine on us this day. The Lord is born for us. Emmanuel, God-with-us, is God's gift of love made visible. 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.

Pope Benedict XVI: "To those of you who are passing through a difficult moment on your journey of faith, to those who take little part in the life of the Church or who live "as though God did not exist", not to be afraid of the Truth, ... never stop searching for the profound truth about yourselves and other things with the inner eye of the heart. God will not fail to provide light to see by and warmth to make the heart feel that he loves us and wants to be loved by us."

Gospel

Sometimes the sheep are us and sometimes the shepherds are us. Today it's the shepherds, because they have lives of ordinariness. They are not the lowest on the social scale but well down. Doesn't that include most of us? It means the message is for everyone. And, like the shepherds, we can get so inspired that we will want to go to where that message is. What we will find is that the message isn't a where. It isn't a what. It isn't a when. IT IS A WHO. It's Jesus himself. He didn't come into the world just to show us how to be loving. He came to show us LOVE itself.

The Angels tell the shepherds in the field: even if you are least among people, God has come for you. Those angels live in the glorious presence of the almighty creator. What we experience as our greatest joys are mere shadows of the

heavenly experience. They were there to tell those shepherds that the same vision is for them. He is seeking you; will you let him find you?

Exposition

Charlie Brown can't kick his blues. 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. We could ask what Charlie Brown asks i.e. what is the meaning of Christmas? And, of course, answers would quite reasonably include that it is about family getting together and celebrating the love they have for one another, the joys of giving and receiving gifts, the anticipation of everything to come, our best food, whatever that happens to be, the inspiration to do good things. All of these things are true and good reasons for enjoying this day, this season.

But, deep down, we like celebration of Christmas because it tells us a lot about love. Faith tells us the reason we love the celebration. It tells us the reason we love. Because God has first loved us. If God didn't first love us then where does love come from. And if love is just about getting good feelings, well we know that's not going to be enough, don't we?

A Christmas Short Story

Once upon a time, there was a man who worked very hard just to keep food on the table for his family. He was upset when on Christmas Eve he saw that the child had used all of the expensive gold paper to decorate one shoebox she had put under the Christmas tree. He also was concerned about where she had gotten money to buy what was in the shoebox.

Nevertheless, the next morning the little girl, filled with excitement, brought the gift box to her father and said, "This is for you, Daddy!"

As he opened the box, the father was embarrassed and regretted his earlier overreaction. But when he opened the shoebox, he found it was empty he got upset at her once again, reminding her that a gift should .and again his anger flared. "Don't you know, young lady," he said harshly, "when you give someone a present, there's supposed to be something inside the package!"

The little girl looked up at him with sad tears rolling from her eyes and whispered: "Daddy, it's not empty. I blew kisses into it until it was all full." The father was

crushed. He fell on his knees and put his arms around his precious little girl. He begged her to forgive him for his unnecessary anger.

It is told that the father kept this little gold box by his bed for all the years of his life. Whenever he was discouraged or faced difficult problems, he would open the box, take out an imaginary kiss, and remember the love of the child who had put it there.

In a very real sense, each of us has been given an invisible golden box filled with unconditional love and kisses. There is no more precious possession anyone could hold. That's Jesus himself.

It is a good time to open ourselves to receive into our hearts the one that this holy season is all about- Jesus Christ.