

Homily For Christmas Day, Year B - December 25, 2023

St Peter's 8:00/9:30 am Masses

Isaiah 6:11-12 "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. A Son is born for us."

Psalms 97:1-12 "Sing a new song to the Lord. Tell of his salvation. Let the earth rejoice."

Titus 3:4-7 "Beloved, the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all."

Luke 2:15-20 "Do not be afraid. I bring good news of joy. To you is born a Saviour, Christ, the Lord."

A Humble Birth

Introduction

Welcome to all of you at this great feast of the celebration of the birth of Christ. Hopefully, no husbands got their wives a vacuum cleaner or a frying pan for Christmas. If you did, I don't know if you should go home before asking if Father can 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. Even if it's the 5th cordless drill he has, there is a very high probability that he will love you for it.

Joy is all around for those who experience family friends and food. Loneliness is all around for those who don't have those things. It's a time when we experience the intensity of whatever meaning we are experiencing in our lives. Christ is born into all of your experiences, your emotions, your circumstances, your losses and gains, sorrows and joys. That's why he was born in simplicity, in humility, in vulnerability. We can sometimes feel like we should avoid being vulnerable. We have to survive in a tough world. The risk when we do that is that we will be kind of isolated, because being in relationships requires a little vulnerability. We have to risk if we want meaningful and loving relationships. But Jesus came into the place where he had nothing but his parents.

A Sunday School was putting on a Christmas pageant which included the story of Mary and Joseph coming to the inn. One boy wanted so very much to be Joseph, but when the parts were handed out, a boy he didn't like was given that part, and he was assigned to be the inn-keeper instead. He was pretty upset about this but he didn't say anything to the director.

During all the rehearsals he thought what he might do the night of performance to get even with this rival who got to be Joseph. Finally, the night of the performance, Mary and Joseph came walking across the stage. They knocked on the door of the inn, and the inn-keeper opened the door and asked them gruffly what they wanted.

Joseph answered, "We'd like to have a room for the night." Suddenly the inn-keeper threw the door open wide and said, "Great, come on in and I'll give you the best room in the house!" For a few seconds poor little Joseph didn't know what to do. Thinking quickly on his feet, he looked inside the door past the inn-keeper then said, "No wife of mine is going to stay in dump like this. Come on, Mary, let's go to the barn." And just like that..... the play was back on track.

Well, that barn is where the shepherds went to see the miracle that had taken place. The fact that angels appear to shepherds to announce the Good News of the birth of Christ, it means the message is for all people, even the least. That's you and me. Christ has come for us. He has come in a low state, as a vulnerable child in a precarious situation. The shepherds are afraid, so the first Good News is one of encouragement. The message of courage is not a thing. It is a WHO. It is Jesus himself who encourages. They go and see Jesus and, when they do, they believe. To see Jesus in some way is to be in the presence of God who is.

The appearance of Christ in a body changed everything. We have lost a sense of the divine. When that happens, we don't become more human. We become less human because we don't know where we come from and where we are going and who we are in between that coming and going. It is precisely this event, this entry of God into human history and human flesh that answers all three of those questions. He came from God. He returned to God. In between, he lived a human life united to his divine life so that we could understand the fullness of blessing that is God's plan for you and I, so that we could experience something of the divine, lift up our eyes to higher things, and be lifted up. Who can say they don't need to be lifted up?

Darkness To Light

This is the day to celebrate the movement from darkness to light. This is the day of joy, of peace, of courage and of hope. The prophet 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. In our experience of the world, there is darkness but in him there is no darkness. For God, the greatest earthly darkness is only an opportunity for a far greater heavenly light.

Peace

We celebrate birthdays with parties. This birthday of Jesus is not meant to be left in the past and just celebrated as a party. It is meant to be experienced right now in the present. Whatever happens, in our life or the life of the world, nothing can disturb the peace that grows in our hearts because Mary and Joseph said yes to God and brought Jesus into the world. Several times they each had experiences which told them that God was acting. When the poor shepherds came to see what the angels told them about, Mary treasured it in her heart. Have you ever had an experience that you treasured, and it became a kind of light in your life? I hope so. We can lose that experience in the darkness and, let's face it, the busyness and also the sometimes too many things we use to amuse ourselves.

This is not a story. It's not a movie about Elf or the Grinch or Charlie Brown or Santa. It is a historical event that was foretold a hundred times. Can you trust it? The historical evidence is significant. Should you trust it? If it is everything billions of Christians have believed for two thousand years, you bet. Will you trust it? You and I can make that decision right now, or later today or tomorrow. I hope we will all give it some thought. The skeptic philosophy of today says you can't trust anything to be true. What about love? Do you believe in love? What is that and where does it come from? If God is love, then God is personal not distant.

Call for Conversion

Once they saw Jesus in person, the shepherds couldn't help themselves. They had to tell people. May we proclaim his birth with great joy and announce the saving love of Jesus Christ in the daily living of our lives.

This child born has come to give us the knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of our sins. We need a saviour and we need forgiveness of our sins. If we don't get that, the birth of Jesus Christ will not make much sense. If we do get that, all of the prophecies, all of God's covenant promises, the Church, the saints, the sacraments, the Eucharist itself, will make sense because the light of Christ will shine on these things for our benefit and for our salvation. The time is now right for us to make room for him, to go and see him, to be lifted up and inspired to live a life of joy and hope and peace. Let us rejoice and be glad.

Key Verses Today

Collect: *O God, who have made this most sacred night radiant with the splendour of the true light, grant, we pray, that we may also delight in his gladness in heaven.*

Isaiah: *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. On them light has shone . they rejoice before you. For a child has been born for us, a son given to us. Authority rests upon his shoulders and he is named Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. There shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom ... from this time onward and forevermore.*

Psalms: *O sing to the Lord a new song all the earth. Sing to the Lord. Bless his name. Tell of his salvation. Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy. Rejoice before the Lord, for he is coming to judge the world with righteousness.*

Titus: *Beloved, the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us in the present age to live lives that are self controlled, upright and godly. while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ.*

Luke: *There were shepherds living in the fields. An angel of the Lord stood before them , and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them: Do not be afraid, for I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people. To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Christ, the Lord. This will be a sign for you. You will find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and 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 heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours. When the angels had left, the shepherds went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger.*