

## Homily For Tuesday of Octave of Christmas - Year II

### St Peter's 8:30AM Mass - Dec 31, 2019

**1 Jn 2:18-21** "You have been anointed by the Holy One ... You know that no lie comes from the truth. "

**Ps 96:1-2,11-13** "He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his truth."

**Jn 1:1-18** "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son who has made him known."

### The Truth of the Matter

#### Introduction

In the Christmas movie, Miracle on 34th Street, there is a man who believes he is Kris Kringle, one of the names for the fictional person of Santa Claus. In the movie, he is more of a Christ figure, because he seems to work miracles of faith in peoples' lives. As happened with Jesus, many in the movie also see him as a deluded fool, and quite possibly dangerous.

A woman in the story has become jaded and cynical about matters of faith. Kris sets about to open her eyes to love and truth. One of the things he does is to help the woman's daughter recapture the childhood ability to play make believe. He teaches her to act like a zoo monkey. This opens the door for her to believe in the miraculous possibilities in her life.

I think this is possibly what we try to do, as a western culture, with the whole Santa Claus story. We use a fictional character, based loosely on the real life St Nicholas. We give him the qualities of loving kindness and tell children that they can ask him for anything and he will bring it as a gift at Christmas, but only if they are good.

Parts of this fictional story are similar to the true story of our faith, but with some very problematic differences which, I believe, have led many people away from faith. Yes, God gives us many gifts, but they aren't the things of this world that we think will make us happy. And being good doesn't just mean not hitting your brother or sister for a couple of weeks before Christmas so you can fool Santa (your parents) long enough to get the toys you want. It means following the path

of holiness, with Jesus Christ being our light in the darkness, as John describes him.

### **First Letter of John**

The Apostle John, the last of the ones who had walked with Jesus after all the others had been martyred for their faith, was dealing with a problem of the truth of Jesus Christ having been perverted. John was absolutely clear that if anyone is believing something other than what had been taught about the truth of the Son of God and his mission, that they were liars and 'antichrists'.

In today's passage from the First Letter of John, antichrist means all of those who deny that Jesus is the anointed Christ, the longed for Messiah. In our time, the Messiah has been reduced to Santa Claus, who has no power to save us. That is the spirit of antichrist.

How John must have been sorrowful that some were leaving and teaching falsehood: "They went out from us, but they did not belong to us." He keeps calling the children of God back to Christ: "Children, you have been anointed by the Holy One. You know that no lie comes from the truth."

### **John**

John's Gospel introduces the truth. The verses we heard today provide a kind of outline of the themes he will develop.

In the beginning: That means at the very beginning of time and space and the universe.

The Word was with God: The Word is a separate person from the Father.

The Word was God: Separate but fully God, sharing 100% in the divine nature.

All things came into being through him: He is the creative power of the universe.

Without him not one thing came into being: There is no other creative power, no other God.

What has come into being in him was life: He is the source of all life in that universe.

The light of the human race: He is our only light. There is no other light that gives understanding about what is true.

The light shines in the darkness: The darkness is the lies about God and us and our relationship. Anything that separates us from truth is darkness. The world is the sphere of the devil that opposes God and hates the truth.

Darkness did not overcome it: The truth will always win, but many will still reject it and end up in darkness.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us: He continues to live with us in Sacred Scripture, in the Eucharist and in the priesthood.

No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son who has made him known: Jesus the Christ is the only one, the only source of the full truth about who God is and his plan of salvation for the human race.

### **St. Sylvester**

Pope St. Sylvester was the first Pope in the era when the Church finally became free of official persecution by the Roman government. But what happened. Almost immediately there was the problem of false teaching. At one point, two thirds of all the bishops of the world adhered to the heresy of Arianism, which taught that Jesus is not fully divine. Under St. Sylvester, the faithful bishops fought for the truth on which John would not compromise. One of the results of Sylvester's leadership was the Council of Nicaea and the Nicene Creed which we repeat today. It is an unequivocal presentation of the truth of our faith.

Ironically, at that same Council, Bishop St Nicholas was also fighting for the truth of our faith with Pope Sylvester. I feel certain that he would have been horrified with what Santa Claus did to his fight for true faith.

## **Call To Action**

The Entrance Antiphon today tells us that "A child is born for us, and a son is given to us." That is the truth we are lifting up and celebrating during this Christmas season.

The Collect prayer also says it most beautifully: "God, in the Nativity of your Son established the beginning and fulfilment of all religion." All truth starts from the Son, who is the eternal Word.

The psalmist tells us to "Rejoice before the Lord, for he will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth." This means that there is judgment but we do not need to be afraid if we live in the light of truth.

The Gospel Acclamation brings it to us: "He enabled those who accepted him to become the children of God." That was the criterion John used. God is the source of truth. Jesus Christ is that truth. It is he who has made it possible for us to see and believe in the truth.

Brothers and sisters, children of God, for that is what we are called to be and that is what we are if we accept Jesus Christ, let us recommit ourselves this very moment, to turn away from darkness and to walk in the light of the truth.