

## **NATIVITY OF THE LORD: MASS DURING THE DAY C/2006**

Today we celebrate one of the most incredible events in human history, the birth of Jesus Christ and the beginning of our redemption. The incarnation of Jesus has changed the face of the universe and has given a new orientation to human history. Before Jesus Christ, and after Jesus Christ, human history is not the same anymore. To better understand the importance of this feast, let us examine the Scriptures and listen to the prophecies contained within them.

With the background of misfortune and misery in which the exiled people of Israel were in Babylon, Isaiah announces a time of liberation and the return to Jerusalem. God himself will reign over his people and bring them back home. There will be a time of salvation and of great joy that has never been before. God will not only comfort his people and redeem them by bringing them peace, but he will also restore the ruins of Jerusalem, in the sight of all the nations. The joy of the people will be indescribable.

Thus, we can understand why the prophet says in the first reading, “how beautiful on the mountains” are the feet of those who bring glad tidings, announcing peace and good news of the salvation of Zion. The sentinels raise a cry, shouting for joy as they see directly, before their eyes, the Lord restoring Zion.

However, this joy will be of a short duration because the people, stuck in their stubbornness, will turn away again and again from God, and forget the good he has done for them. They will sink repeatedly into sin and rebellion against God until, when the time came, God would intervene by sending his Son, Jesus Christ, to be the redeemer and the savior of the world.

The letter to the Hebrews describes the many attempts God made to bring his people to him and to reconcile them with him. It describes also the various ways God used to speak to us and to reveal us his love. He tried, first, to reveal himself to our ancestors through the work of his creation, but this way was not sufficient. He tried also to make known his will and to communicate his message through the mouth of the prophets. But even this way did succeed at all. In the end, God, in the fullness of time, sent his Son into the world. This Son is the One through whom he made all things from the beginning of the world. In him, with him and through him, he created the universe and sustains it.

In this respect, the incarnation of Jesus is the highest of the revelations of God to the world. Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God. He is the reflection of the glory of the Father and the fingerprint by which He sustains all existing things in being. Without Jesus, there is no life; without him, the world is lost. It is Jesus who has accomplished our purification from sins and obtained for us a place in the kingdom, where he sits already at the right hand of the Father.

At the center of the celebration of Christmas, there is a mystery, namely that God has become a human being. In Jesus, the ever-invisible God has taken flesh and become a human being like us. In Jesus, God has taken a human face and espoused human nature. Jesus is not only the Son of Mary, but also the Son of God, the Savior. He was from the beginning with God and he is God.

Jesus is the light that the Father has sent into the world to enlighten our darkness. Whoever accepts God's light will never be lost. Jesus, the word of the Father, is God's gift to the world to bring us peace and joy. Whoever welcomes him and walks in his paths will have the peace of heart that surpasses any good someone can have in this life.

If we want God's light and life to be manifested in us, we need to change our lives radically, to make them conform to the image of the One who has become one of us so that we become part of him. We must give up all evil behavior that pushes us to choose sin and death instead of life. That is why the celebration of Christmas challenges us. As we gather together for the feast of the birth of Jesus, a question comes up again and again, "What difference does it make in your life to celebrate Christmas"? "After all, why another Christmas"? It is up to each one to answer personally and sincerely that question.

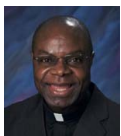
As Christians, we are here to celebrate the beginning of our redemption and the incarnation of the Son of God in the world for our Salvation. As Christians we witness to the truth that, in spite of difficulties and conflicts crossing our world and our own lives, we are not alone; God is with us in his Son, Jesus Christ; he loves us. To know that God loves us and wants us to become his children, by believing in him, makes a difference in our lives. This gives us courage to confront the present and to hope for the future.

Christmas is not a celebration of a past event, but of an event that takes place today as we try hard to live in the spirit of Christ. In Christmas, there is the revelation of God who made himself one of us, but there is also the revelation of a new humanity, a beginning of a new history between God and human beings.

Christmas is not an event of the past; it is an event that happens anytime we create a new world and a new humanity around us. Anytime we share with the needy, the abandoned and the foreigners without jobs and resources, we witness to the truth of Christmas, that Jesus was born poor to make us rich in God. It is through our care that new world and the new humanity brought by Jesus can take place today.

Christmas invites us to the globalization, not that of economy and market, but that of heart, generosity and solidarity. Christmas invites us to be open to others, not to be scared of others even if they are different from us. Let us open ourselves to the differences, for we are all equal before the crib.

God has become one of us to share with us his life. He has given us proof of his love by becoming one of us. Let us respond to him with love and listen to his cry as he begs our love. Let us not miss the opportunity to welcome him in our hearts and to receive his peace in this day. Merry Christmas to all!



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