

Nativity of the Lord: Mass at Midnight A/2007

Our God is a God of love, a love that pushes him to act for the benefice of those he loves. In fact, when someone loves, he gives everything he has, and is, including his own life. The feast of Christmas is the feast of the love of God for us, a feast in which we celebrate the incredible event of God becoming a human being in order to save us, and the beginning of our redemption.

In order to better understand the meaning of this feast and the importance it represents for human history, let us examine the Scriptures and the prophecies contained within them. In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah describes a time of rejoicing and gladness God was about to bring to Israel. In spite of repeated wars, sufferings and exile, Israel will live in peace and joy. Those who walked in darkness would see a great light; those who dwelt in gloom a light would shine on them. Those whose yoke has burdened the shoulders would receive relief. Everything that reminds of battle or blood would be burnt forever in flames.

The reason for this joy and hope lies in a sign the Lord has given to his people, that sign is a child who is born, upon the shoulders of whom rest all the dominions. That son is a particular one, a Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of peace, says the prophet. His kingdom is as vast as is the world; his reign is peaceful as was that of David, judging with justice and righteousness.

If the immediate context of this prophecy referred to Israel, its long-term refers to the whole world that will be redeemed in Jesus Christ. As it can appear, Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of God's promise to give to the world a Messiah and Savior. The Gospel of this holy night narrates what happened at that time when Jesus was brought into the world, in the small town of Bethlehem in Palestine.

The historical and geographical data surrounding this narrative intend to tell us that Jesus is not a tale or a legend. His birth really took place in this world and under particular circumstances. He is rooted in human history. He has a family and a country from where he can be located and identified like any human being. In fact, to be human is always to belong to somewhere, to exist at some time and to live in some place. Thus, Luke notes the birth of Jesus as a sign of a historical reality of the visit of God, and the witness to the fulfillment of God's plan.

At the center of the celebration of Christmas, there is a mystery, namely that God has become one of us. 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 and history. Jesus is not only the son of Mary, but also the Son of God, the Savior; he is not only the prophet of Nazareth, but also Christ and Lord. From now on, we know that God has a face and a name. From now on, we know who God is for us and who we are for him.

Jesus is God's gift to the world in order 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. Jesus is the Savior the Father has sent

to deliver us from all lawlessness and to cleanse us from our sins so that we become God's people, eager to do what is good in his presence.

If we want God's life to be manifested in us, as St Paul says, we have to reject all godless ways and worldly desires and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this troubled age. 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. We must strive for justice and peace, to cling to honesty and sever ourselves from anything that prevents God's love to grow in us.

As Christians, we are assembled here to celebrate the beginning of our redemption and the wonderful event of 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 belong to 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. Christmas leads us to the contemplation of the face of God in the child in the crib. In this night, there is a revelation of God who made himself poor, but there is also a revelation of a new world and, 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, the refugees 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 a new world and the new humanity brought by Jesus can take place today.

Christmas invites us to live our present life out of the values of God's kingdom by sharing with the poor and the needy as a testimony that in Jesus Christ we are all brothers and sisters. Christmas invites us to get out of ourselves, to go toward 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. At Christmas, the joy and the peace of Christ are more compelling than prejudices that divide us. May we listen to the voice of wisdom the child in the crib is addressing us.

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 tonight. Merry Christmas to all!

Isaiah 9, 1-6; Titus 2, 11-14; Luke 2, 1-14



Homily Date: December 24, 2007
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Contact: www.mbala.org
Document Name: 20071224omily.pdf