

Nativity of the Lord: Mass during the Day A/2007

When we read the Bible, from the story of Abraham to the last prophet of the Old Testament, the striking point we find is that they all talk about God, but none of them has ever seen God. When Abraham speaks about God, he says that the voice of God came to him enjoining him to leave his country; when Moses speaks about God, he says that he heard a voice from the burning bush commending him to go and liberate the Israelites, but in reality they did not see God. Even when the prophets talk about their vocation and mission, they often say that in a vision, God appeared to them and talked to them, but in truth they did not see at all the real face of God. Because according to the words of Exodus 33, 20, "No one can see God and remain alive".

But that invisible God that nobody has ever seen has suddenly chosen to make himself visible and known in a very particular way in Jesus Christ by becoming a human being. The letter to the Hebrews we heard as the second reading at this Christmas celebration describes God's many attempts to communicate himself to the world and to reveal to us his love. First of all, God tried 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 not succeed at all. Finally, 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 that respect, the incarnation of Jesus is the highest point of the revelations of God to the world. 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.

But, who is this Jesus? What is his true identity? The Letter to the Hebrews says that Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God. He is the reflection of the glory of the Father and the fingerprint by which God sustains all existing things in being. To this description St John adds these beautiful words from the Gospel: Jesus is the Word of the Father with whom he created the universe. He preexists from the beginning of the world, because all things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be.

All this helps us understand that at Christmas we celebrate a big mystery of our faith, namely that God has become a human being in order to save 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. 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. He gives life to the world and to those who believe in him.

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 to embrace Jesus and become like him and live out of his words.

As Christians, we gather 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. When, instead of the culture of death, we spread life and joy around us, we make Christ be born again in our midst, our hearts, and in our world.

Because in the Christmas event our salvation has already started, let us rejoice with the angels and all the men and the women of good will. Let us make our own the joy and the cheerfulness that stirred up Jerusalem at the return of the deportees. Then we can say with Isaiah, How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, and saying to the desperate and the needy, "Your God is King" and in Jesus you have a Savior. Let us, then, call upon the prince of peace to bring peace to our hearts and our world. Let us ask the infant Jesus to bless all the children all over the world on this Christmas season. Peace to each one of you in Jesus Christ. Merry Christmas to you and God bless you all at this Christmas season.

Isaiah 52, 7-10; Hebrews 1, 1-6; John 1, 1-18



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