

## **Christmas Mass during the Day B/2008**

The incarnation of Jesus Christ in the world is one of the greatest events that has changed forever the face of the universe. Human history, both before Jesus Christ and after Jesus Christ, is not the same anymore. The readings on this Christmas day focus our attention on the birth of Jesus as the celebration of the beginning of our redemption and the fulfillment of God's plan to save the world.

In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah describes the joy and the cheerfulness that stirred Jerusalem at the return of the deportees from the exile in Babylon. At that time, the whole country was in joy, as the period of slavery and humiliation was over. The good news of peace and salvation was on all the lips, from the watchmen on the top of the mountains to the simple inhabitants of Jerusalem.

For Isaiah, with this liberation, God wanted to restore the ruins of Jerusalem and to redeem the city. He wanted to console his people at the sight of all the nations so that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of God of Israel. In spite of the fact that this prophecy was realized, the people of Israel forgot the good deeds of the Lord. Time and time again Israel went on sinning and abandoned the ways of the Lord.

As the second reading says, God tried in many ways to speak to the world through their ancestors and the prophets, but without any probing result on their part until he eventually decided to send his son Jesus. What God did with the prophets was to make himself known and to communicate his message. But even this way was not the best for the self-revelation of God.

That is why, when the fullness of time was fulfilled, God sent his son into the world as the perfect image of himself. Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the shining of God's glory among humans. He sustains everything by his mighty word and leads all creatures to the Father. His name is far superior to the angels, because he is the beloved son of God.

All this helps us understand why the Gospel of John presents Jesus as the savior of the world and as the one without whom we will never have access to God. That is what the celebration of Christmas tries to display before us, namely that in Jesus God has given us his gift so that by believing in him we might have eternal life.

Jesus is the word of God with whom the Father has created the universe and with whom he continues to sustain the world with his love. From the beginning of the creation this word was with God and this word was God. In Jesus God is fully present since Jesus makes God visible and tangible. This word was made a human being like us, spoke a human language, and dwelt among us so that he could tell us about the Father and what we have to do in order to belong to his kingdom.

From Jesus we have received the fullness of life and the fullness of knowledge of God. From Jesus we have received grace over grace, because the invisible God that nobody had seen before was made visible to us in Jesus. From now on, we know that the invisible God can be met, listened to, touched and approached in

Jesus Christ. That is the good news of Christmas, namely that God has become close to us more than ever in Jesus. If we want to know the Father, all we have to do is to behold Christ and to carry out what he recommends us.

In a world dominated by the darkness of sin and the shadow of death, Jesus comes in our midst as the real light that enlightens the world and everyone who believes in him. His coming dissipates the shadow of doubt so that we come to the true knowledge of God and receive our eternal salvation. To receive Jesus in our heart is to receive the Father who sent him, and to inherit the eternal life. That is what Christmas is all about. Beyond all the festivities in which we are involved in this season, we have to come to make a room in our heart for God so that he dwells in us. Christmas should make a difference in our lives, in our families, in our relationships with God and with others.

Christmas is the feast of the loving exchange between God and humanity. It is the celebration of the mystery of the coming of Jesus into our world and his dwelling among us. By becoming a man, God gives us human beings access to his divinity in a more tangible way than before. From now on, we know that God is at the heart of our world; he is involved in our history and in our lives. He is our partner forever. Our history becomes his history; our life becomes his life, and our concerns become his concerns. We cannot celebrate Christmas and overlook that God is sharing with us our victories and our defeats, our successes and our failures, our joys and our sufferings.

Christmas reminds us that we have to live not only according to human patterns, but also according to God's law. Anytime we try to separate God and human being, the divine and the human, we overlook the truth that God has become one of us to make us divine. Christmas reminds us that human fate and God's destiny are inseparable. There is no true humanity without worship of God; there is no true worship without the service of our fellow humans. The service of our fellow humans loses its meaning when it is not founded on the love God has revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

The bottom line of all this message is this: what difference does Jesus bring into our lives as we celebrate Christmas? Where do we stand in our relationships with Jesus and the Father who sent him? What can you do in your life to come close to Jesus who has become a human being for you? Let us make Christmas an opportunity to meet God and to embrace the salvation. Let us call upon Jesus to bring peace to our troubled world. Peace to you with whom we gather in this celebration; peace to your families and to those you love in your hearts. Merry Christmas and God bless you all!

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



Homily Date: December 25, 2008

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Document Name: 20081225homily.pdf