

## **Christmas Mass During the Day C/2012**

The readings of this Christmas feast bring us to the heart of the great event of our salvation, namely the birth of Jesus. They show us that the incarnation of Jesus is a turning point in the history of humanity, because it is the beginning of the redemption of the world and the fulfillment of God's promise to save us. For that reason, they invite us to rejoice with the angels and all the men and women of good will for what God has done for us by sending Jesus into the world.

The first reading of the book of Isaiah describes the joy of the return from exile. It imagines how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who come to announce to Zion the end of its slavery and the beginning of its liberation. It invites the people of Zion to raise the voice and to shout for joy for God is their king.

Because God is their master, he will restore Zion in its right and reconstruct the ruins of Jerusalem. At that time, all the nations of the earth will see how God redeems Jerusalem and brings his salvation to his people.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is the redeemer of his people. Although the exile has brought his people down, his saving power was at hand whenever they needed him to bring them out of suffering. It is that idea that underlies the feast of Christmas we celebrate today. Another idea is that where the power of God appears the nations cannot fail to see it.

This text helps us understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as it brings before our eyes the true identity of Jesus. First of all, the Gospel reveals that in the beginning was the Word. That Word was with God and was God. Everything that exists in the World was created by the Word. The Word came into the world as the light of the human race and shone in the darkness, but the darkness did not like it.

Then, the Gospel talks about John the Baptist who came in the world in order to bear witness to the light. It says that as the Word came in the world, not only did the world ignore him, but even his own people did not receive him. But, to those who accepted him, he gave the power to become children of God.

Moreover, in his witness, John has clearly pointed that while the law was given to men by Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. It is Jesus, then, who reveals to us the ever invisible God. From his fullness we have all received grace over grace.

The Gospel finishes by attesting that the Word that existed from the beginning of the world became flesh and dwelt in the world. Those who believed in him saw his glory. It was the glory of the Father's son, full of truth and grace.

What do we learn from this Gospel? According to this prologue of St John, it seems clearly that Christmas is the celebration of the coming into time of eternity. What do I mean by that? Let me start by defining what time and eternity mean. In fact, we call time a dimension in which events can be ordered from the past through the present into the future and eternity, a time without beginning or end.

When the Gospel says that the Word was from the beginning, that it was with God and was God to the point that all things were created by him, it affirms the truth that in Jesus Christ, the ever-invisible and eternal God has appeared in time, in the world.

That truth is also attested by the Letter to the Hebrews when it says that in the past and in many ways, God has tried to speak with human beings, but without a real success. In the end, he sent his Son into the world. Through that Son, he made all things in the world. And in him, with him and through him, he created the universe and sustains it.

In that sense, the incarnation of Jesus is the highest point 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 the universe. Jesus has accomplished our purification from sins and sits at the right hand of the Father in order to intercede for us.

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. He is God.

If in Jesus the invisible God has become one of us, that has some consequences we ought to consider. First of all, on a general level it means that we people who live in time, in the world, have to live in such a way that we aspire to eternity. That is why although we live on earth, our eyes have to be fixed on the things of heaven, where the eternal values are.

Second, on an individual level, it means that each one of us is important before God. Whatever might be our personal history and what people think of us, God loves us in a unique way and we count a lot for him. Therefore, we do not have the right to despise ourselves or depreciate others because of their past or their recent life.

Third, on a level of history, it means that our history becomes God's history; our life becomes God's life; our problems become God's problems and our concerns God's concerns. That is why as Christians we witness to the truth that, in spite of crises in our world and in our own lives, we are not alone. God is with us in his Son, Jesus Christ. To know that God loves us and wants that we become his children makes a difference in our lives. This gives us the 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. Anytime we create a new world around us by bringing smile to those who have lost it and hope to those who are in despair, we let Christ be born again. Anytime we give the best of ourselves in order to improve the human condition, we bring Christ into the world.

Christmas reminds us that we are the bearers of God to others. At Christmas, Jesus gives us the duty of bringing him to others so that they know him, too. Let us respond to him with love and listen to his cry of love. Let us not miss the opportunity to welcome him in our hearts and to receive his peace on this day. Blessed Christmas to all of you!

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



Homily Date: December 25, 2012  
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Contact: [www.mbala.org](http://www.mbala.org)  
Document Name: 20121225homily.pdf