

## **Christmas Sunday C/2015**

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 in the world 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. 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 prophet Isaiah announces the joy of Israel's return from exile. It describes how beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the one who comes to announce to Zion the end of its slavery and the beginning of its liberation. It invites the people of Zion to shout for joy, not only because God reconstructs the ruins of Jerusalem, but he also redeems them.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is the redeemer of his people. There is also the idea that though the exile has hurt Israel, God's saving power would put an end to their pain whenever they needed him to bring them out of suffering. The last idea is that it is impossible to hide the power of God wherever it is at work.

This text helps us understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as it talks about the true identity of Jesus. First of all, the Gospel affirms the anteriority of Jesus, the Word of God, over the created world. It affirms the divinity of Jesus and his equality with the father.

Then, it highlights a paradox inherent to the situation of sin, namely that, though Jesus was the light of the human race, the world preferred darkness to light. After that, the Gospel talks about the witness of John over the Word, his rejection by the world and his acceptance by some.

The Gospel finishes by highlighting the abundance of grace that comes through Christ and the privilege of seeing in him God that nobody had seen before.

What can we learn from this feast? Today I want to talk about Christmas as the celebration of the coming of eternity into time. In order to let you understand what I mean, let me start with a simple definition. What is time? What is eternity? I call time a measure in which events can be ordered from the past through the present into the future and eternity, a time without beginning or end.

So, when the Gospel says that the Word was from the beginning, that it was with God and was God, and all things came to be through 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, God spoke in partial and various ways to the ancestors through the prophets, but in these days he has spoken through the Son, whom he made the heir of all things and through whom he created the universe.

In that sense, the incarnation of Jesus is the highest point of the revelations of God to the world. Jesus is, then, the perfect image of the invisible God. He is the reflection of the glory of the Father and the fingerprint by which God sustains the universe in life.

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 consequences we ought to consider. First of all, on a general level, it means that we who live in time, which is the world, have to live in such a way that we aspire to eternity. That is why though we live on earth, our eyes have to be fixed on the things of heaven, where the eternal values are.

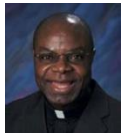
Second, on an individual level, it means that each one of us is important. Whatever might be our personal history and what people think of us, God loves us in a unique way and we count a lot for him. Therefore, we do not have the right to despise ourselves or depreciate others because of their past or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

Third, with regard to 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 violence in our world today and in spite of crises 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 us to 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 a 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 and live by his word. 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. May you all have a Blessed Christmas!

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



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