

Christmas Day Mass A/2016

The readings of this celebration of Christmas point to this great event of the birth of Jesus. They invite us to rejoice with the angels and men and women of good will for the special gift God has given by sending Jesus into the world as our savior. The first reading describes the prophecy of Isaiah announcing the joy of the liberation of Israel from exile. It portrays the beauty of the feet of the messenger who carries the good news of liberation and the delight of the people, beneficiary of God's gift. It shows also how God is the author of such a gift and how, by doing so for his people, he makes his glory and salvation known to the nations.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is the author of the joy of his people. Whatever might be the suffering of his people, he ends up by visiting them and setting them free. Another idea is the truth that, when God consoles his people, all the nations of the earth see his glory and come to learn of his saving power.

This text allows understanding of the joy of Christmas as described in today's Gospel. First of all, the Gospel starts with an affirmation on the identity of Jesus as God. It also asserts his eternity and his creative action from the beginning of the world. Then, by highlighting the divinity of Jesus, the Gospel says that everything that exists in the world was created through him so that without him nothing would have had life.

The Gospel holds also that Jesus, who was at the origin of the world, is also the light of the world. It talks about the preference the world gave to the darkness instead of light and affirms that to those who have accepted him, he has become a source of salvation.

After that, the Gospel emphasizes that Jesus as the Word of God with whom everything was created, became flesh and made his dwelling among human beings. Finally, the Gospel declares that by his incarnation the world has seen his glory that many years in the past the prophets have announced.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today I want to talk about the joy of Christmas. First of all, let me wish to each one of you and the members of your families a Blessed Christmas and the peace of Christ.

What we celebrate at Christmas is the joy of the birth of Jesus. In fact, when people celebrate a birthday, they do it with candles, lights and gifts because it is an important day for them. A birthday is always important because it commemorates the day a person came into the world. It is also important because, though the birth happened some years in the past, it is still present in the life someone leads today.

That is why it is impossible to get rid of a birthday as we do with old pants. Perhaps, some might not like to celebrate their birthday, but they cannot change it. In truth, it is impossible to get rid of a birthday as long as someone is alive. Moreover, it happened that for important people, even dead, their beloved ones still remember them and the day of their birth as though they were still alive.

A similar logic can be held with the celebration of Independence Day. In fact, 200 years ago, the United States of America became an independent country. But, each year the American people celebrate with joy, jubilation and fireworks, because from that past event a nation was born and continues to live today. When 2000 years ago God sent his son

Jesus in the world to be our Savior, he was opening an era of grace, healing and blessing for the whole world that had to mark forever all the generations of people to come.

When, on a day like this, we gather together to celebrate Christmas, we remember the abundant love of God that led him to send Jesus into the world. We celebrate a new beginning and a new history between human beings and God.

That event that God fulfilled in the past is perpetually present because God's intention is eternal as his love is unending. In that perspective, we understand that Christmas is not a celebration of an event of the past, but of an event that takes place today because God's love is eternal.

As for a nation born from the past that continues to live today by keeping the spirit of the founding fathers, Christ is born every day in our hearts when we keep his spirit and when we live by his law of love. The celebration of Christmas is the celebration of a mystery of love: a love so big that it pushed God to become a human being in Jesus Christ.

The Letter to the Hebrews summarizes in clear words the mystery of Christmas, namely that the ever-invisible God has made himself visible in Jesus Christ and dwelt among human beings. That is why the incarnation of Jesus we commemorate at Christmas is something unique in human history. Its significance is highly important as the event itself. God, who nobody had ever seen before with his own eyes, has made himself available to us in a very tangible way.

Why did he do so? He did so that we come to see him with our own eyes, we touch him with our own hands and we listen to him with our own ears. He did so in order to show us how he cares for us and for our eternal salvation. If that is true, then, it would be a mistake not to care for Jesus. That is why Christmas reminds us that because God loves us, we too have to love him in turn. Therefore, we cannot live as though God does not exist and guided only by human standards. But rather led by God's Law of love of him and of our fellows, we have to strive to please God who has become one of us in order to make us divine.

Let us, then, rejoice together with angels and men and women of good will for the coming of Jesus in our world. Let us ask Jesus to bring peace to our world, our country and our families. May Jesus bless all the children so that they might feel the presence of God around them in everything they do! May Mary and Joseph be close to all the parents who struggle in the education of their children! May God bless you all! Merry Christmas to all!

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



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