

Christmas Midnight Mass C2018

The readings of this Christmas feast bring us at 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 mankind, 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 God's liberation. It shows how on those who were walking in darkness and those living in affliction God's light has shone. It compares that joy to that of farmers who harvest and that of soldiers who divide the spoils. The text ends by giving the reason of that joy by referring to a child that God has given who has the power to set free.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is the joy of his people. There is also the idea that where God is present, there reign peace and freedom. The last idea is related to the truth that God's gift of a child brings rejoicing to the world.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's' Gospel as it talks about the birth of Jesus. First, the Gospel reveals that there was a census decreed by Caesar Augustus for the world and each has to enroll in his native town. It reports that, as Joseph was a descendant of David, he went with his pregnant wife, Mary, to Bethlehem, his native town.

Then, it describes the birth of Jesus that took place while they were over there. It also describes the visit of the shepherds to the crib as they were alerted by an angel. The Gospel ends with the mention of the songs of thanksgiving and jubilation executed by the heavenly host and the angels at the sight of the baby Jesus.

What can we say about Christmas? Today we celebrate one of the greatest events that have changed the face of the world, the encounter between heaven and earth, the divinity and the humanity. In Jesus, heaven and earth meet, divinity and humanity join together in order to give to the world the greatest gift among all, that of God becoming a human being.

This gift of God has a story rooted in our own history. It is not a myth; it is not a legend; it is a historic reality whose traces we can find in our own human history. That is what all the readings of tonight try to bring to our attention, namely that God has chosen a house among us; he is one of us. How did it happen?

The first reading talks about what was before it happened. People walked in darkness like in a night. They dwelt in the land of gloom as though they were living perpetually in a cemetery. They were burdened like those who carry weight on their shoulders. They were troubled as though they were in war.

And then, God came to them; he visited them and everything changed for the best. A great light appeared to them; the yoke that burdened their shoulder was smashed down; the boots that tramped them like in battle were burdened as fuel for flames. God gave them a child, a Prince of Peace, Wonder-Counselor, God-hero, Father-Forever.

The Gospel of tonight gives us plenty of details about the time all that happened. It was at the time when the Hebrew people were under the dominion of the Roman Empire. At

that time, Caesar Augustus decreed a census that brought Joseph and his wife, Mary, to Bethlehem, the city of David. It was there that the son of promise, Jesus, was born in order to save the world.

It is because of that gift of God to the world that we rejoice tonight with the angels, men and women of good will throughout the world. Tonight we celebrate the fact that God gives us the proof of his love by becoming one of us. He loves us so much that he gave of himself to us. From now on, we have a tangible proof of the love of God by seeing his son Jesus becoming one of 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.

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 is God's gift to the world in order to bring us peace and joy. Whoever welcomes him and walks in his paths will have the peace of heart that surpasses any good that someone can have in this life.

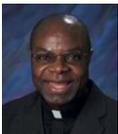
If we want God's life to shine in us, we need to change our lives and make them conform to the image of the one who has become one of us so that we become part of him. We must give up evil behaviors that push us to choose sin and death instead of life. That is why the celebration of Christmas challenges us so that we live according to God's words of life.

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. Christmas happens anytime we create a new world around us. Anytime we give the best of ourselves in order to improve the human condition, we bring Christ into the world.

Christmas teaches that God is loving and caring. 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.

God has given us a proof of his love by becoming one of us. 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 tonight. Blessed Christmas to all of you!



Isaiah 9: 1-6; Titus 2: 1-14; Luke 2: 1-14

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