

Christmas Mass During the Night B2020

“I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord”.

It was in these terms that two thousand years ago the angels announced to the shepherds and the whole world the good news of the birth of Jesus. That joy is what we celebrate tonight: A child is born for us; God has given us a savior.

Before entering deep into this feast, let me, first of all, greet you and thank you for choosing to start or to continue the celebration of Christmas with the Holy Mass. I know that though many among us are the usual Churchgoers, some, however, are here because it is Christmas. I welcome you all and thank you for accepting to join us on this feast.

The fact that we are all here together, as family and friends, shows that Christmas plays a big role in our life. It is a special time not only for us, but also for the whole world. In fact, with the entry of Jesus in the world, something has changed in human history. The world is not the same anymore; our personal history and the history of the world are not the same anymore. The trajectory of history has changed forever, because our own life and our destiny make sense only in so far as we are related to Jesus.

What do we celebrate tonight? We celebrate the gift of life that God has given us by sending Jesus into our world. In fact, we are used to receive gifts from friends and families. This Christmas will not be different in this way. Each gift has a story linked to it; because it reminds us of particular relationships we have with people who, on this particular moment of our life, want to show that they care for us, how we are important to them or how, for one reason or another, they are grateful to us.

It is impossible to look at any gift without reminding us of a story of a relationship that ties us to the givers of the gift. Because each gift has a story, it is unique; because each gift is unique, it is meaningful. Without speaking, a gift bears a language of love and relationship. Each gift received brings us joy and happiness because not only does it show that someone is thoughtful about us, but also it shows that he holds us in esteem.

However, whatever might be the satisfaction and the joy we feel when we receive human gifts, we know by experience that there is a deep longing in each one of us that a simple gift cannot completely satisfy. That is why even when we receive gifts, we still are hungry for more; we need to have as many gifts as possible.

That longing for more and for the best of the gifts is what God wants to fulfill at Christmas by giving us a gift that is beyond any other, namely his son, Jesus. In fact, the coming into the world of any child is a gift of life. It is just a question of looking at the parents when they have their first baby. The presence of another being into their life changes everything for them: their approach to life, the meaning they give to it, their perspectives for the future, etc.

By giving us the gift of his son, God shows that he cares for us and holds us in high esteem. He wants us to know that we are important to him and he loves us. We might not be aware of his love and concern for us, but at Christmas he makes that love and concern visible through the sending of his son into the world to be our savior. That is why the name of God's gift to us is Emmanuel, meaning God is with us. In Jesus, indeed, God is

truly with us, sharing our life and willing that we become divine like him who became human so that we become like him.

In that perspective, it becomes clear that Christmas is above the celebration of God's love; a love so deep that God did not hesitate to descend on earth and to dwell among human beings. In fact, when someone loves, he wants always to be there for the beloved one; he makes himself available all the time; he does not live at long distance, but rather with the loved ones.

At Christmas we celebrate the truth that God did not love us by staying at a distance, but rather by becoming one of us in Jesus. In Jesus, God is here; close to us more than ever. It is through Jesus that we can pray to God and call him "Abba". In Jesus, God has pitched his tent among us. In Jesus, God reveals his new face and opts for a human address.

This is so true that since the birth of Jesus, millions of people have found a new way not only of understanding the world around them and their fellows, but also of living it. It is also true that for centuries of history, many people have been touched by this child from Bethlehem, have been caught up in his message, and have their lives profoundly changed by him. We are numbered among them.

The birth of Jesus Christ is not the birth of one religious prophet among many others or of one founder of a religion among many others or again the birth of one good man among many others. It is rather the joining of humanity with divinity. What we celebrate is the fact that God has become very much a part of his creation.

God has entered the process of creation with us. He is not simply alongside of us, he is part of us as we struggle to find a solution to so many overwhelming problems we have. He is part of us as we suffer in a world straining to be born anew, living in a frenzied drive to bring perfection to a world that is far from perfect. What we celebrate is that God is living out, with us, through us, and within us, the full measure of human suffering. That is why he is called "Emmanuel, God with us".

But here is the question: who can be loved without feeling the need to love in turn? That is why at Christmas, the baby Jesus is begging our love. Jesus has accepted to be born in a manger in order to share in our poverty. However, he did not share in our poverty so that we remain poor, but so that we become rich of God.

All the festivities and the shopping we do at this season are legitimate, however, we have to remember that making room in our heart for Jesus is what gives true meaning to the Christmas celebration. In that sense, Christmas is not a commemoration of an event of the past, but rather of an event that takes place now and today as we let Jesus dwell in us, live in us and transform us. Let us ask the infant Jesus to bring us his peace that surpasses all the good someone can wish for himself. Merry Christmas to everybody and God bless you on this Christmas season!

Isaiah 9: 1-6; Titus 2: 11-14; Luke 2: 1-14



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