

Christmas Mass During the Day B2023

On this Christmas day, we rejoice with the whole church and all the people of Good will throughout the world for the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. The invisible God that nobody had seen before has taken flesh and become a human being like us.

St John says that Jesus Christ is the Word of God that was in the beginning and through which God created everything that exists in the world. That Word was God, became flesh and dwelt among us. People saw his glory, the glory of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth (John 1: 14). In Jesus, the invisible God made himself visible, touchable and approachable.

The story of the nativity as told by Luke says that Jesus was born in a manger, "because there was no room for them in the inn" (Lk 2:7). As Mary and Joseph did not find a welcome in any house in Bethlehem, Mary had to lay the Savior of the world in a stable, the only place available for the Son of God made man.

Why do we have to return every year to this event and all its details? We return to it so that we rediscover anew what God did for us for our salvation, and by rediscovering it, we realize that Christmas is not an event of the past. It is an event that takes place today in our hearts and in our families. If God cannot find a place in our hearts and in our families, Jesus will never be born again, within us. Our hearts and our families will resemble the inns of Bethlehem where there was no available room for Mary and Joseph so that Jesus might be born there.

"But to those who did accept him, St John says, he gave the power to become the children of God, to those who believe in his name. (John 1: 12)" Thanks to the entry of Jesus in the world, we have become adoptive sons and daughters, coheirs with Jesus. Before Jesus, and after Jesus, human history is not the same anymore. Our life and our destiny have been changed by the entry of Jesus in the world. While the whole human race expected the birth of Jesus with vague presentiment, the chosen people awaited it with explicit awareness.

This morning the prophet Isaiah gives us a witness of that expectation from many distant centuries in the past and which has brought people to burst in cries of joy: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, and saying (...) "Your God is King!" (...) Break out together in song. (...) All the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God." In Jesus Christ, God himself took into his hand the human destiny. In this child of Bethlehem, God is present in a very particular way. "What a child imbued with mystery!" "What a Son wrapped in mystery!" Who would approach him without realizing he is approaching God? He is fully human, but at the same time, he is fully God.

The author of the Letter to the Hebrews gives also his witness. He tells us that, "In times past, God spoke in partial ways to (Israel's) ancestors through the prophets. (But), in these last days (of ours), he has spoken to us through his Son, whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe" (Hebrews 1: 2).

With those two witnesses we realized that Jesus is the Messiah and the fulfillment of the promise of the Old Testament. In him, the Old Testament and the New Testament come together to form one block of the mystery of our salvation. Today, a savior has been

born to us; a king has come for us. His birth reveals from the very start and beyond any doubt what the logic of God is like. God chooses poverty and weakness. God teaches us to discard the human logic based on power and force, logic that even some Christians are tempted to use.

Today we celebrate the feast of love between God and humanity. It is the celebration of the mystery of his coming into our world and the recognition of his dwelling among us. By becoming a man God gives us human beings access to his divinity as he shares in our humanity. From now on, we know that God is at the heart of our world; he is involved in our history and in our lives. He is our partner forever. Our history becomes his history; our life becomes his life and our concerns become his concerns. We cannot celebrate Christmas and overlook that God is sharing with us our victories and our defeats, our success and our failures.

Christmas reminds us that we are created for God. Therefore, we have to live not only according to human patterns, but also according to God's law. Anytime we try to separate God and human being, the divine and the human, we overlook the fundamental truth that God has become one of us to make us divine. Christmas reminds us that human fate and God's destiny are inseparable. There is no true humanity without God; there is no true adoration of God without service to our fellow human beings.

Our society has made Christmas a feast of family, an opportunity to exchange gifts and to meet friends and relatives. What a great blessing! But, let us not limit the celebration of Christmas to just that. Christmas is about God who loves human beings and wants to share in their lives. Christmas is about God who wants that human beings become divine. Let us listen to him and respond with love to his invitation.

Like the celebration of last year, this Christmas is overshadowed by the war in Ukraine, and the war between Israeli and Palestinians in the band of Gaza. For those who know that part of the world, when there is a tension in Gaza, life stops in Bethlehem. So, the birth place of the Prince of peace becomes part of human conflict and political struggle. Let us pray for peace between these enemy brothers. Let us ask our Lord Jesus to bring peace to our world today. May his peace reign in our hearts and our families! May you all have a Blessed Christmas!

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



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