

CHRISTMAS EVE HOMILY 2020

Isaiah 62: 1-5 + Acts of the Apostles 13: 16-17, 22-25 + Luke 2:1-4
Holy Spirit Catholic Church: 5 p.m., 8 p.m., & midnight, December 24, 2020

In Bethlehem, the Roman soldiers stationed there for security for the census do not pay much attention to the Jewish man and his young wife, pregnant with child. All they see is a couple who are not a threat to them or to the Roman Empire.

The innkeeper looks at this couple as a nuisance, for because of the census bringing so many visitors from out of town, he has no place to put them. They are but a problem he has no way of solving, and so he slams the door in their face.

The owner of the humble little shelter for the animals sees a couple in dire need for a place to be out of the elements, so the woman can give birth to her child. He gives them a place to lay their heads.

Only the lowly shepherds, the smelly outcasts of society, see a bit deeper, beneath the appearances to the reality that this newborn child is the Promised One, the Christ.

Of course, they have the help of the angels.

How appropriate that shepherds are the first to receive and believe the news of Christ's birth, because the child of Promise is a direct descendant of the shepherd-King, David.

With the eyes of faith, we see that this humble carpenter searching frantically for a place for his wife to give birth has royal blood running through his veins.

Joseph, a direct descendant of King David, would be king if the Romans were not ruling Israel.

With the insight of faith, we notice something more than a pregnant teen giving birth, for we see Mary as Mother of God and future Queen of Heaven!

Through the sharply focused eyes of faith, we see in this child, who comes into the world like any other child in a rush of blood and water, the Savior of the World and the King of the Universe.

He is God dwelling among us in the flesh!

When we “prettify” the birth of the Son of God, we forget that the Son of God came in the flesh into our world at a very difficult time:
a time when His people suffered from Roman oppression,
a time when His earthly parents were far from home,
a time when the only place available for Him to come was a place where animals lived.

Just as He came in a time of discomfort and challenge for Joseph and Mary,
so he comes today into our world of turmoil and struggle.

Into this broken world, Jesus the Christ comes:
a world where many cannot gather with family or attend Mass,
or are experiencing income loss, or whose loved ones are sick with COVID-19,
or are mourning the death of loved ones.

In this land of gloom a light shines which pierces the storms of sorrow
and drives away the shadows of fear.
Christ is born today and the whole world rejoices!

What can we do to sharpen our sight, to enable us to see and welcome Him now?

By staying immersed in the Word of God on a daily basis and at the celebration of Mass,
our eyes are opened to see the Word made Flesh in our midst and to hear His Voice.
Our hope grows as we hear how our ancestors in faith persevered through
much tougher times than ours, and how God remained faithful to His promises to them.
Listening and drinking in the stories of salvation history, our hope strengthens
that God will remain faithful to us, too.
Sunday after Sunday we are nourished by the stories of how God never tires
in searching for his people, who are often lost and need to be found by his love.
But in order to hear this saving word of love, we need to cease listening to all the
hateful and divisive words on social media, which drown out His Word.

The Eucharist strengthens our trust that “God-is-with-us, Emmanuel.”
Being fully human, Jesus understands the temptation to doubt God’s presence and care,
especially in tough times.
That is why he left us the Eucharist as a solid reminder that He is God with us.
As He joins his life to ours in this sacred meal, we see how He is always coming
to bring us abundant life here on earth and the promise of life eternal.

The joyful reception of the Living Word of God and the Living Bread come down
from Heaven happens most powerfully in the midst of a Community of believers.

We need one another, especially in tough times, to be Christ to and for each other. The Church exists because we need others to love us with the heart of Christ and to challenge us to expand the circle of the ones we love. Our brothers and sisters in Christ help free us from slavery to a rugged individualism, reminding us we are only going to make it through this pandemic together, and that we always need others to help us on our journey of faith.

We are a little over 9 months into this pandemic with the celebration of Christmas. 9 months in, and now, more than ever before, we need to give birth to the Christ who lives in us by faith. He is the Hope of the World, the Love of God enfleshed, the Source of our Faith!

With 20-20 vision, we see Him as he comes to save us today from ourselves. With the sharp insight of faith, we see Him as he comes to save us from our isolation from one another and from God. With the eyes of our faith renewed by this celebration of His birth, we see Him coming to set us free from our sin and from the consequences of sin, eternal death.

Jesus Christ, son of Mary, son of God, is the source of our Joy!
In Him and with Him and through Him, we rejoice in God's goodness and Love!!

Rev. Joseph A. Jacobi