



Holy Family of Jesus, Mary & Joseph Blessed Christmas December 26, 2010 A

WELCOME AND A BLESSED CHRISTMAS!

I hope you enjoyed our celebration of that awe-filled moment in time when God “pitched his tent amongst us” and took on human form. What a tremendous act of humility for our Creator to become one of us! In the Incarnation, God came to live in our midst. He experienced in the deepest way our joys and sorrows. God, in the words of St. Paul:

“Emptied himself (of his divinity) to assume the condition of a slave and became as all people are accepting even death on a cross (i.e., the death of a condemned criminal).”

How amazingly profound of our God to join the human race in this way. He could have come to us as a child of privilege. Instead, he chose to live among us as a poor man—identifying in a special way with the lowly and outcast.

When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush (Exodus 3:7-8), he said to him:

“I have seen the miserable state of my people.... I am well aware of their sufferings.”

In the Incarnation, this same God decided to go one step further and *join* his suffering people. But he did not just visit the afflicted. He actually took on the pain of all humankind. *“Ours were the sufferings he bore”* (Isaiah 53:4). In the Incarnation, God became *“a man of sorrows familiar with suffering”* (Isaiah 53:2). Never again could we say our God is aloof and distant. We may *think* he is. But the truth is he is closer to us than we are to ourselves. His Christmas name *Emmanuel* (God-with-us) reminds us that our Creator is not only Transcendent (totally other) but also Imminent (totally close with us).

Sometimes in our pain and suffering and loneliness, we cry out to God for help. We want desperately to feel his closeness and presence. If, for some reason, we cannot *feel* that presence, we must try to believe in the darkness of faith that he is very close. In fact, he is weeping and suffering with us. This is the truth—whether we experience it or not, or believe it or not.

I believe one of the very successful tricks that Satan plays on us is coaxing us to believe that “God is absent”; “God is distant”; “God can’t be trusted”; “God doesn’t care.” When we think any of the above, we are, I believe, under the influence of the evil one.

It must sadden, if not break, the heart of God when we give in to the evil spirit’s promptings and believe that God is absent, distant and uncaring.

Jesus comes especially to express solidarity with the forsaken and poor of the world.

When God decided to join our human race, he chose a people, very small (i.e., as a nation) and preoccupied. He joined a lower income family who could only afford the offering of the poor when they went to the Temple (Luke 2:24). He chose to be born not in a nice hospital or home, but in an abandoned cow barn. Just imagine the Creator of the world being born in a cow barn! His first visitors were not the important people in town but lowly shepherds from nearby hills. Shepherds were considered outcasts. Talk about God’s ways not being our ways. As an infant, his parents had to flee with him to a foreign country—not in fancy transportation but on a donkey. For the first few years of his life, he, Mary and Joseph were immigrants who spoke with a “funny accent.” Our God, who could literally have enjoyed the lifestyle of the rich and famous, chose instead to live as an outcast.

How could we ever even think our God does not care and love us madly? The late spiritual writer and monk, Thomas Merton, writes:

“Into this world, this demented Inn, in which there is absolutely no room for him at all, Christ has come uninvited. But because he cannot be at home in it, because he is out of place in it, and yet must be in it, his place is with those others for whom there is no room. His place is with those who are discredited, who are denied the status of persons, who are tortured, bombed and exterminated. With those for whom there is no room, Christ is present in the world. He is mysteriously

present in those for whom there seems to be nothing but the world at its worst.”

A daily devotional can nurture our spiritual lives especially if we are not regular churchgoers.

If you do not come to church on a regular basis, how do you nurture your spiritual life? One way is to take a few minutes each day to read and meditate on a daily devotional that speaks to your heart. One of the most popular Catholic daily devotionals is by Jesuit priest, Fr. Mark Link.

Over the years, I have sold hundreds and hundreds of Fr. Link’s daily devotionals and many people tell me how much they like them. His three devotionals are based on the scripture readings for the various seasons of the liturgical year: Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter and Ordinary Time. Each devotional offers a scripture verse, a reflection, and a quote from some well-known writer. The following are two samples:

Sample One

“The Word became a human being and...lived among us.” (John 1:14)

One Christmas day during World War II, a young family was outside making a snowman. Suddenly a plane flew by overhead. After it had passed, the tiniest child turned to her father and said, “Daddy, how do people climb up to the sky to get into planes?” Her father explained that passengers didn’t have to climb up to the sky to get into the planes. The planes came down from the sky to get the passengers.

The child’s question helps to illustrate the mystery of Christmas. It celebrates the fact that I don’t have to climb to the sky to get to God. God has come down to earth to me. Where do I meet God easiest on earth?

“It is good to be children sometimes, and never better than at Christmas.” (Charles Dickens)

Sample Two

[When Lazarus died, Jesus told his sister Martha,] “Your brother will rise to life.” [Then Jesus added,] “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me will live, even though he dies.” (John 11:23, 25)

Father Walter Ciszek spent 23 years in Russian prisons and work camps. Eventually, he was released and returned home to America. His book *He Leadeth Me* describes the deep faith in eternal life that burns brightly in the hearts of Russia’s ordinary people. All the decades of atheistic propaganda by the media have not altered this faith.

What convinces me most that there is life after death? What keeps me from living more in accord with my belief?

“If seeds in the black earth can turn into such beautiful roses, what might the heart of man become in its long journey to the stars.”
(Gilbert K. Chesterton)

The current devotional for Cycle A is called “Vision—Praying Scripture in a Contemporary Way.” Teresa at the parish office can order it for you with no postage fee or you can order it yourself online.

For our visitors

I am glad you joined us today for the celebration of Christmas. If you live in the area and don’t go to church regularly, we would love for you to consider coming more often. Whether you come to church regularly or not, we are here to serve you. We are never too busy to take time to sit and listen to your concerns.

A big THANK YOU to all who in any way helped to make our Advent and Christmas season liturgies prayerful and spiritually enriching. I am especially grateful to our music and liturgy director Mary Birmingham, her liturgy committee and her choir, to Ashley Breau and his contemporary choir, to our sacristans, readers, eucharistic ministers, ushers, altar servers and sound technicians.

In Christ.

