

Midnight Mass Homily

St. Peter's Cathedral, Christmas 2015



The story that is the first Christmas and the simplicity of it all never ceases to touch us. It is a celebration of the heart for young and old. We see the couple, Mary and Joseph, with the new-born infant in the stark surroundings of a stable. Then there are the shepherds who hurried to Bethlehem to confirm the truth of what the angel had said to them, that a saviour had been born. His birth would give glory to God and be the occasion of peace and harmony for the whole human race. Which of us does not like to linger quietly before the crib and take in something of the mystery presented to us there?

God's ways are indeed mysterious. Our faith teaches us that this tiny infant, whose mother was Mary, was also the only Son of the eternal Father. The Evangelist John in the prologue to his gospel marvellously called Jesus the Word, because what God wanted to say to us human beings is found in this child. His future life, his teaching, his miracles and his message of hope for the poor and downtrodden would, in Pope Francis' description, reveal to us the merciful face of God. His offering of himself on the cross as the Paschal Lamb of sacrifice would prove the extent and the depth of the Father's love for us.

What then should our approach be to the story of Christmas? We can take our cue from the child's mother, Our Blessed Lady. She opened her heart and responded generously in faith to God's invitation for her to become the mother of Jesus. The Son of God also waits to come into our hearts and be born again within each one of us. Like the shepherds, *'let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.'* I like to think that the child those shepherds and the wise men from the East saw lying in that stable, changed them deeply, and that they returned to their own places and way of life different people.

The season of Christmas will pass, but Christ remains. The holidays will come to an end and we too will eventually have to return to our daily routines in the New Year. Scripture tells us that, *'Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever'* (Heb. 13:8). In this Jubilee Year of Mercy now beginning, may the Lord Jesus accompany us on all our paths that we may experience through him something of the Father's tender love for each one of us. I wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas, and the special presence of the Christ-child in your homes and in your families. Amen!

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