

Christmas Mass of the Day B/2014

On this day, we celebrate one of the greatest events that have changed human history. Before Jesus Christ and after Jesus Christ, human history is not the same anymore. The readings of this day draw our attention to the birth of Jesus as the beginning of our redemption and the fulfillment of God's promise to send the savior to the world.

The first reading of the book of Isaiah describes the joy of the people of Israel at their return from exile in Babylon. It refers to the exaltation that characterized the whole country that came in the announcement of their liberation and the recovery of freedom. It invites people to rejoice and be glad as it pleased God to restore Jerusalem by showing his power before all the nations.

What is behind this text is the idea that God is the comforter and the savior of his people. There is also the idea that God is capable of transforming sadness into joy and slavery into freedom. The last idea is related to the truth that whatever might be the meander of the history of his people, God remains faithful and for that reason he will one day intervene in favor of his beloved ones.

This text allows us to understand the stakes of today's Gospel as it refers to the marvel of the incarnation of the word of God in the world. In fact, the Gospel starts with a statement on the eternity of the Word of God and the identity between God and his Word. Then, it affirms the eternity of the Word through whom the world was created and is now sustained in being. It gives also the testimony of John who qualifies the Word as the light of the human race, but which the world did not accept. It equally refers to the testimony of John by affirming that from his fullness we have received many graces.

After that, the Gospel says that for those who have accepted the Word and believed in him, he has given them the privilege of becoming the children of God. The gospel finishes with a reference to the incarnation by saying that the Word became flesh and dwelt among human beings as his glory was clearly seen as that of the Father full of grace and truth.

What shall we say for this feast? First of all, let me 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 a 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 as well as the history of the world is 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.

I believe that is what all the readings of this Christmas day try to bring to our awareness, namely that God so loved the world that he sent his son into the world so that whoever believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life. The first reading of the book of the prophet Isaiah describes that kind of joy and jubilation that befell the whole people of Israel, when God intervened in liberating them from slavery. The letter to the Hebrews describes the climax of God's many attempts to connect with the world that have led to

Jesus. The Gospel of John describes Jesus becoming a man and his dwelling among us as the breakthrough of God in the world and human history.

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.

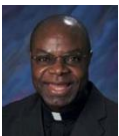
This is so true that since the birth of Jesus, millions of people have found a new way not only of understanding the world around them and their fellows, but also of living it. It is also true that for centuries of history, many people have been touched by this child from Bethlehem, have been caught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

Moreover, 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 rejoice because our salvation has started in Jesus. God bless you all!

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



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