

## **Christmas 2020**

Is 9:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; Lk 2:1-14

It has been an unusual year. We all faced a common enemy in COVID, and our routines and lives were changed a bit. Now a light has come at the end of the tunnel - new vaccines, and a new hope. It is interesting that this hope has come at this specific time of the year, just after we have passed the shortest day of the year; each day the light shines more and more. For some, an enemy came into the world (a disease), things got darker and darker, and then as it was near the darkest, a new light dawned as the scientists saved us. However, this does not give due credit to God who created patterns in nature that humans could decipher, a God who endowed us with an intelligence and all the resources necessary to develop a vaccine and deliver it. Far from a Godless triumph of man over nature, it is a God-assisted triumph - and I can see in its coming at this time of year, a message from the Lord for us.

We can't let this past year and its craziness erode our way of life. The change in family routines should only have a one-year hiatus with a strong return next year, our patterns of life and social interaction should be renewed as soon as possible, and we must not let the wonders of science cause us to replace faith in God the savior with faith in humans as their own savior. So I have personally tried any way I could to counteract this trend of eroding our life and beliefs. We have tried to maintain parish life as normal as possible, I have renewed my study in science and found more deeply the God which underlies it, I have resolved that family and social relations suspended this year will return next year - and I have even walked in the Mall at Christmastime, keeping sharp my skills of dodging people who leap out of stores and cut me off in mid stride. Gotta be in shape for next year!

Most importantly for us this Christmas is to renew in our minds the specialness and glory of the feast of Christmas. Christmas is a time to remember the important things in life, to bring happiness into a dark time, and to renew our hope. The prophet says in the first reading: *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shown.* We see this come true in the lengthening sunlight of our days, we see it in the light at the end of the COVID tunnel - and both of these things happening at the same time should draw our attention to another source of light. More than a change in the amount of daylight, more than the relief from a sickness that could bring a possibility of death - we look to the great event that saved us from a certain death.

People may work hard to convince others that there is no existence of the soul after death, they work hard to convince you that all that matters is what happens in the temporary world, and that the only source of power is in human ingenuity. But this is a cheap sell. To tell you the truth, if that were the way it was, it is not so much a cause for hope as a reason wit worry. It is a mere shadow of the reality of an ever-present and eternal God. It's a cheap imitation (like one of those fake Gucci purses). The belief that we must depend only on ourselves doesn't so much give us a lasting hope as it always causes us to look for the next new source of temporary human hope and a light that will fade. The source of light that we remember today is one that shone to the world on that first Christmas night when Jesus was born. The real enemy is not COVID, or our destruction of the planet, or a natural disaster, or our life plans not working out - the real enemy is death itself. Humans try to prevent an illness and lengthen life, they promise if you eat what you are told and take the medications they order you will live longer, they sell the hope one day that we can freeze our heads and have them connected to a robot. All of this is a knock off - a mere shadow of the real and genuine escape from death in the next life that comes in Jesus Christ.

So don't be sold on imitations, go for the genuine article! Triumph and light is not found in us trying to have control, or in temporarily extending the inevitable. The real victory, the real light that has shown, the real escape is the one that comes from God coming into this world as Jesus Christ so he could open up an eternal life. In this life, we can follow the life that Jesus laid out for us. By doing this we can maximize the love in our families, we can spread joy and peace in the world, we can return to more healthy social situations, and not be so worried about the next possible threat to come along. No matter what happens, no matter how successful humans are with God's help at trying to extend life, there is a light of Jesus Christ at the end of the tunnel - one that is there whether or not human succeed at their efforts. So as we go forward, take to heart the words of the angel from the Gospel: *Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy.* The joy is that there is a God, there is a way to be peaceful and happy and not be thrown off balance by the problems in this life, and that there is another life beyond this one - all this help now and endless peace in the future is made possible by the birth of this child. Happy Birthday to Jesus, and Merry Christmas to you all!