

Mass of the Nativity of the Lord
December 25, 2019
Year A – John 1:1-18
----Father Michael Grant George Cadotte----

Isaiah, in his poem read in our first reading, used visual and verbal imagery to announce the good news. His use of imagery would speak to the first audience of the time and continues to echo through the ages all the way to us today. Today we have our own imagery to herald the good news of the birth of our Lord and Savior. Radio stations, up and down the dial, play all manner of Christmas music. Parties and gatherings feast on rich foods and sweets that we associate with the Christmas holiday. Music is sung in churches, on street corners, and in stores of the birth of Jesus. And if you single out any one of these heralds of our modern time, I am willing to bet that your mind will directly link to your heart some special meanings and moments of Christmas.

Again, in our second reading, we start with poetry that was most likely sung in the early liturgies of our faith. This reading, song, is an excellent connector looking back at the past proclamations of the prophets, and the incomplete law and knowledge of their time, and the time of Jesus as he fulfills and completes the Law as God incarnate, God with us – Emmanuel. This is what John also begins his own Gospel with when referencing the beginning of creation and God's hand at making ... well, everything including us. It is that latter, humankind, that God eventually decided to come down and be among us. To experience our humanity, to be seen by humanity for the first time, to pitch his tent with us and share in all the good and bad that mortal human life offers. God with us, not only in the flesh, but God with us in emotion, spirit, and love. Like a friend who stands *with* his friend in times of need, God is now *with* us forever.

So, the prophets of old foretold Jesus' coming, and the saints wrote of it in their Gospels and letters about the amazing and divine life of Jesus. But the birth of Christ was even talked about by others such as our Islamic brothers and sisters in their Quran. Mary was spoken of some seventy times in the Quran and views her as being, "...chosen...above [all] women of the world..." [3:42] and for this, and her virgin birth of Jesus, Islam holds the birth of Jesus as one of the most supreme miracles of God. Nowhere in history, I dare say, has one singular event been so boldly foretold, then proclaimed and recorded, then that of the birth of our Lord and Savior.

There is, however, an even more significant event that occurred with the birth of Jesus. God not only humbled himself to be born as a helpless human baby, but chose to be born poor, in a situation of homelessness, which soon led to becoming an illegal immigrant for his own protection. I cannot imagine a greater Christmas present than the very first Christmas present ever given to anyone – given to the world by God. God, the creator of the Universe, chose to be with us, to humble himself to experience mortal life for our sake, and to deliver us unto eternal life. All of this from that first Christmas present wrapped in the perfect womanhood of Mary who presented that gift to all of us this very day.

God choose to come to us, be with us and to teach us and God did this from the margins of society my friends. In God's choices to enter this world physically and in the preaching of Jesus, we are reminded time and time again that it all was occurring on the margins. To those down on their luck, unwanted and unloved, the reviled, the poor, those outside the faith, and those who were sick So, if you want to meet God, you must go to the margins of society as that is where

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God has always been and is still there waiting for you to be Jesus' hands and feet in ministry and love.

Now, I understand there are many rules and cautions on the sometimes frowned upon tradition of re-gifting, but in the case of this first Christmas gift, we all get a pass. The birth of Jesus into the humble situation he chose to come to us establishes many of our social teachings of the church today. Love of all humanity. Love and care for the poor. Care for those down on their luck and under stress. Love for the immigrant and refugees of the world and even more specifically in our own back yard.

Jesus is born as told by so many inside and outside of our faith, but even before he uttered a single word, parable, or fulfillment of Law, Jesus began teaching us how to live and love by the miracle of a gentle and innocent birth.

This Christmas enjoy the love of family and friends but also take time soon after to reflect on the lessons that Jesus' birth proffers to us and re-gift it to others in your words, thoughts, prayers, and actions. In so doing, you will keep the meaning of Christmas alive in your heart, and active in the world, as God always hoped each of us would.

Merry Christmas. AMEN.

---Citations---

The New American Bible: United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2010

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