

2020 December 25

Christmas

Reading:

First: Isaiah 9.2-7, "His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace." (7)

The Psalm: 96, "Declare his glory among the nations." (3)

Second: Titus 2.11-14, "The grace of God appeared, bringing salvation to all." (11)

The Gospel: Luke 2.1-16, "You will find a child wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." (12)

Silent Night, Holy Night!

On a Christmas day when people were filing out after the morning mass, when I was greeting them with Merry Christmas', Some responded with Merry Christmas, other with Happy Christmas and a few with 'happy holidays'. I was still reflecting on a Christmas story wondering what would be the Christmas story for the children, if they had any, of those in the 'happy holidays? I venture to ask now what is Christmas for us?

For most people of the world this is the biggest shopping season. It is also a season of renewing friendships and long-neglected contacts. For most children, especially in the west, Christmas means Santa Clause and the gifts he delivers. For the so-called secular minded non-believer and for most nominal believers it is holiday season. Even the believer is shy about bringing Christ into a Christmas greeting and in a Christmas day chat. We are, of course, Christians. However, aren't we a bit shy of Christ?

Is it any easy for us to begin a conversation about Christ and the amazing sequences connected to his birth in the manger of Bethlehem? Sometimes we are uncomfortable when someone else initiates a conversation on Christ and Christianity, mostly because we have nothing to compliment. We may happen to be strangers to the Bible they bring into the conversation. May be we need to enter into the mind set of the people involved in the first Christmas story, which is part of history, His Story and ours too. Do our children of today have a chance to hear and to know the Christmas story, its meaning and then, gradually as they grow, to grasp a glimpse of Christ and his story into which our story is supposed to be sewed in? If they do not hear this story from the mouth of their parents and grandparents, they are likely to miss Christ and his story, and Christ is unlikely to be part of their life. Does this scenario explain the absence of Christ in Christmas, that he is absent in our homes and in our public places?

We need to go back a little into the preparations Mary and Joseph might have done for their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. The family knew that the Baby was on his way out before they might be back home. That was not the time of 'ready-mades, and throwaway diapers, which were non-existent those days. By the way, does anyone understand now what the swaddling clothes were, with which Mary wrapped her Baby as the angels mentioned announcing the birth of the Messiah to the shepherds? We may have to meet Mary and the many generations who lived after her and a generation or two who lived before us to know what they were. Mary was ready with them to cover and protect her baby that cold night in a cattle shed, in a distant place. The world has grown too big after the first Christmas. The language of the first Christmas is now alien to us. Our children need to hear the story in that language today. Dare to teach them. ***Merry Christmas to you and to them!***

Fr. George

(The readings of the day are given at the beginning. The numbers in parentheses refer to the quotes from them. Good to go through the readings beforehand to properly understand the Reflections)

