

Nativity of the Lord Vigil Mass 2013
(Deacon Pat Hall)

Isaiah 62:1-5; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25; Matthew 1:18-25

Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings.

Merry Christmas!

It is almost cathartic to say it out loud.

We've been in preparation mode during Advent these past few weeks. We've had an ever increasing sense of pregnant expectation for this most wonderful of days.

Of course our Christmas celebration is not just for this one day.

Our celebration of Christmas continues for 19 days, up through the Feast of our Lord's Baptism in January. So continue to greet people with a "Merry Christmas" in the days to come.

In fact, feel free right now. Greet those around you with a joyous "Merry Christmas"!

Go ahead. I'll wait.

This is a wonderful day as we remember when our God took on our skin to live our struggles and to experience our joys. He came in humility to share in our humanity so that we could come to share in his divinity.

This is a wonderful day to acknowledge that Jesus is with us, now, in a very real way.

This is a wonderful day to pray for his future coming when all will be made right.

You see, God is a big God, the source and creator of all.

He is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent.

It is hard, though, to embrace such power and brilliance, He who is beyond our comprehension.

But, maybe not so a baby.

A baby is helpless.

A baby is totally dependant on others for life.

But, a baby has a way of energizing all those around to come to his care.

People swoon over any piece of recognition, any smiling acknowledgement.

People are drawn to dote over an infant.

Could that be a reason God came as a baby, small, vulnerable and dependant, so we could embrace him?

As a deacon, I have been privileged to administer a number of infant baptisms. It never fails to amaze me to see the families gathered as they witness this most tender of sacraments.

I can almost see the love for their infant flowing like visible mists through the air all directed towards their little child.

I've told them that I wanted to grow up to be just like their baby, open and dependant.

These babies never seem to put up any resistance to the love being showered upon them by their parents and families.

Why, as we grow older, do we put up resistance to the love that God is unceasingly showering upon us?

Could that be a reason God came as a baby,
so that we could learn to love and receive love as God does?

Baby Jesus is fully human.

A baby does not become more human simply by living additional days and years. A baby possesses the fullness of humanity, we believe from the moment of conception.

Baby Jesus is also fully divine.

Baby Jesus does not become more Godly by adding this attribute or that.

He is ... and always has been ... in the eternal relationship of the Trinity.

Could this be a reason God came as a baby,

so that we could understand ourselves for who we truly are and who we are meant to be, the divine sons and daughters of God?

Think of the special babies in your life, your children, nieces, nephews, siblings, and cousins, or maybe those for whom you baby-sat.

Can you recapture that emotion as you remember how you doted upon them?

Feel it.

Can you take that feeling and give it to Baby Jesus?

If you are able to do so, can you take that feeling you have for Baby Jesus and share it with a baby who is a stranger?

Stranger babies grow up. They are Jesus' brothers and sisters around you.

Can we allow Jesus to teach us how to love them like we love the Baby Jesus?

Today, as I go to communion, I am asking God's grace to receive him with the same wonder and love that I experienced when my wife, Jan, and I first held our newborns.

We love because he loved us first. Because he loves us, we can love each other.

It *is* all about the baby.