

***THE REINDEER GOSPEL***

***SOLEMNITY OF THE NATIVITY OF THE LORD***

***(CHRISTMAS)***

***Mass During the Day***

***Year B***

***Is 52:7-10; Ps 98:1-6; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18***

**Santa's most popular reindeer by far is Rudolf...Rudolf, the Red-Nosed Reindeer. Here is his story written as a poem by Robert L. May and put into music by songwriter, Johnny Marks: Rudolf, the red-nosed reindeer, had a very shiny nose. And if you ever saw it, you would even say it glows. All of the other reindeer used to laugh and call him names. They never let poor Rudolf play in any reindeer games. Then one foggy Christmas eve, Santa came to say: "Rudolf, with your nose so bright, won't you guide my sleigh tonight?" Then all the reindeer loved him, as they shouted out with glee: "Rudolf, the red-nosed reindeer, you'll go down in history!" The story of Rudolf, is the story of salvation. It is our story, both as individuals and as the human family. In our own case, it's not Santa who saves us, but the Child Jesus.**

**To begin with, Rudolf was a misfit. Compared to the image of the ideal reindeer, we can say that something was definitely wrong with him. What is more, he was not in any position to help himself. So are we all, misfits, as the Bible tells us: "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). "*All we like sheep have gone astray*" (Isaiah 53:6). Like lost sheep, we are not in a position to help ourselves. Rudolf**

could not help himself. All that his fellow reindeer did was to make things worse for him. Only one person could help him...Santa...a messenger from heaven.

Well, today we celebrate the birth of the Messenger from heaven. As we read in today's gospel, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God....And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us*" (John 1:1, 14). He comes to liberate us from the human predicament...our sinfulness. For it is sin that mars and disfigures the beautiful image of God in which we all are made. Sin turns us into a despicable, helpless Rudolf, the red-nosed reindeer. But our heavenly Messenger comes, not to take away the red nose, but to declare to us the Good News that we are acceptable to God...even with the red nose. Rudolf's red nose was a defect...But Santa chose him precisely on account of that, and the shine of that defect led the sleigh and all the other reindeer through the night skies on Christmas Eve. Our heavenly Messenger has the ability to turn the defects and red noses of our tainted humanity into assets for the service of God. Jesus is this heavenly messenger.

**What makes the “reindeer gospel” so poignant is that Santa doesn’t use his magic wand to heal Rudolf of his red nose defect. He lets him go on with the shiny red nose even as his chosen reindeer.**

**Certainly, Rudolf would have wanted nothing more than to be a normal reindeer like all the rest. Similarly, Jesus doesn’t simply make us good boys and girls, men and women...rather, He makes us into people who can use all our strengths and defects to the service and to the glory of God. This is the proof to us that it’s not by our own will power that we are able to become children of God. It is by God's grace, by God's unmerited and unconditional love of us all. As God tells St Paul, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness*" (2 Corinthians 12:9).**

**How does the grace of God achieve this transformation in us?**

**God's grace works two things in us: enlightenment and empowerment.**

***"For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through***

***Jesus Christ"*, as we heard in the Gospel (John 1:17). God's truth**

**enlightens us and God’s grace empowers us. God's truth enlightens us**

**to see ourselves and our world in a new light. It is a word that brings**

reassurance, affirmation, and hope. You can imagine how Rudolf felt when he heard the words of Santa: "*Rudolf with your nose so bright, won't you guide my sleigh tonight?*" That's why we call it the "Good News"! It is news that is liberating and empowering. It empowers us by changing our former disposition of insecurity, despair, and hopelessness into that of blessed assurance, new hope, and enthusiasm in the Lord's service.

Like Rudolf before Santa, let us today listen to the Message that the Child Jesus brings us...let us commit ourselves into His service without looking back, even when we do not know where the journey will lead us, but knowing one thing for sure: that the grace of God will supply the strength we need for the long journey of faith ahead. The words of John's Gospel are clear: "*For to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God*" (John 1:12).

May God bless you this Christmas day...A very Merry Christmas to all!!! Felix Navidad!!!