

**In Today's Gospel**

Merry Christmas! In today's Gospel, we receive a message of hope. I say this without knowing which Gospel you have heard at Mass today. There are four options available for Christmas, plus an additional option for Sunday, the Feast of the Holy Family. However, I feel confident saying that we received a message of hope in today's Gospel because that is what the Gospels are all about, hope.

From start to finish, the Gospels are a message about hope, hope founded on the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. From the first moment of time, from the moment God thought the universe into existence, God intended for humanity to be with him for all eternity. In the beginning, God walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden. It is not God who walks away from us, but we who walk away from God. This is not what God intended from the beginning, and it is not what God intends now.

God entered into his creation so that he might show us the way back to himself. Jesus Christ became one like us, in all things but sin, so that we might have an example to follow. The example that Jesus gives us, is an example of humility. There are no limits to the way that Christ could have entered into creation. He could have come down like a comic book superhero. He could have come as a Superman, without weakness, who could fly, leap tall buildings in a single bound, and resist any efforts to kill him. But that is not how he chose to enter his creation.

Christ entered his creation as a helpless child. From the moment of his birth, Jesus was dependent upon his parents, Joseph and Mary. He was dependent upon them to keep him safe and warm. He was dependent upon them for food and protection. He was dependent upon them to change his diapers. He who was the creator of all that is, made himself utterly dependent upon others. This is a model of humility for us to follow. We must recognize that we are dependent on God, the God who gives us hope.

We always need to hear a message of hope, but we need that hope this year more than most. Christ came into the world to bring us a message of hope, love, and salvation. Amid the difficulties we find ourselves in this year, let us look to the message of Christmas. Let us see that message and follow that shining star that leads us into the eternal splendor of God.

**Feast of the Holy Family**

Even as we continue to celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas, on the first Sunday of Christmas, in a special way we celebrate, the Holy Family. Through his choice to enter into his creation as a member of a family, Jesus sanctified the family. The family is the Domestic Church. Through their creative act, parents share in the work of God's creation. Through their love for each other and their children, parents share in the love of God. Through their struggles, they share in the struggles that the Holy Family faced two thousand years ago. Like many young families, Mary and Joseph faced difficulties. First, with Mary nearly nine months pregnant, they had to go on a road trip. They found themselves in a strange town without a place to stay and without family to support them. Then, not long after the birth of their child, their lives were again cast into turmoil. The life of their child was in danger. No different from any parents today, when their child's life was in danger, they did whatever they had to do to protect him. They fled to Egypt. Before they fled into Egypt, however, they first took their child to the temple. As soon as it was possible after the birth of Jesus, they took him to the temple to be dedicated to the Lord, very similar to parents bringing their child to church for baptism. The Holy Family faced many of the same joys and difficulties, challenges, and rewards as any family today. Let their love for one another, their dedication to caring for one another be a model for our families and for the world.

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