

The Nativity of the Lord Christmas

Mass During the Day

Reading 1

[Is 52:7-10](#)

How beautiful upon the mountains
are the feet of him who brings glad tidings,
announcing peace, bearing good news,
announcing salvation, and saying to Zion,
“Your God is King!”

Hark! Your sentinels raise a cry,
together they shout for joy,
for they see directly, before their eyes,
the LORD restoring Zion.
Break out together in song,
O ruins of Jerusalem!
For the LORD comforts his people,
he redeems Jerusalem.
The LORD has bared his holy arm
in the sight of all the nations;
all the ends of the earth will behold
the salvation of our God.

Responsorial Psalm

[Ps 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6](#)

R. (3c) All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

Sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done wondrous deeds;
his right hand has won victory for him,
his holy arm.

R. All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

The LORD has made his salvation known:
in the sight of the nations he has revealed his justice.
He has remembered his kindness and his faithfulness
toward the house of Israel.

R. All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

All the ends of the earth have seen
the salvation by our God.
Sing joyfully to the LORD, all you lands;
break into song; sing praise.

R. All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

Sing praise to the LORD with the harp,
with the harp and melodious song.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn
sing joyfully before the King, the LORD.

R. All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.

Reading II

[Heb 1:1-6](#)

Brothers and sisters:

In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways
to our ancestors through the prophets;
in these last days, he has spoken to us through the Son,
whom he made heir of all things
and through whom he created the universe,
who is the refulgence of his glory,
the very imprint of his being,
and who sustains all things by his mighty word.
When he had accomplished purification from sins,
he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
as far superior to the angels
as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

For to which of the angels did God ever say:
You are my son; this day I have begotten you?

Or again:

I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me?

And again, when he leads the firstborn into the world, he says:
Let all the angels of God worship him.

Gospel

[Jn 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14](#)

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He was in the beginning with God.
All things came to be through him,
and without him nothing came to be.
What came to be through him was life,
and this life was the light of the human race;
the light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.
A man named John was sent from God.
He came for testimony, to testify to the light,
so that all might believe through him.
He was not the light,
but came to testify to the light.
The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.
He was in the world,
and the world came to be through him,
but the world did not know him.
He came to what was his own,
but his own people did not accept him.

But to those who did accept him
he gave power to become children of God,
to those who believe in his name,
who were born not by natural generation

nor by human choice nor by a man's decision
but of God.
And the Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us,
and we saw his glory,
the glory as of the Father's only Son,
full of grace and truth.
John testified to him and cried out, saying,
"This was he of whom I said,
'The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me
because he existed before me.'"
From his fullness we have all received,
grace in place of grace,
because while the law was given through Moses,
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.
No one has ever seen God.
The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side,
has revealed him.

or

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HOMILY

Lowly in the Manger Lies

'The Word became Flesh and dwelt amongst us.' (John 1.14)

With these words John goes to the very heart of the meaning of Christmas. He doesn't tell us about the circumstances of the birth of Jesus. There's no mention of his being born in a stable, nor of the shepherds being inspired to come and adore the baby Jesus. Certainly all this is important in telling us that he was born in very humble circumstances, and not in a palace. In this Jesus identified with the countless people who are born into poverty.

But as we meditate before a crib we are struck by the reverent love Mary, Joseph and the shepherds show the baby Jesus. They inspire us to join them in adoring the babe born at Bethlehem. They believed that he was Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth.

Some artists have shown Joseph taking off his shoes, not because his feet were sore, but in remembrance of Moses being told to remove his shoes. That was a sign of reverence for God as he revealed himself in the burning bush, and promised to deliver his people from slavery in Egypt. Joseph, like Moses, realized that he was on ground made holy by Almighty God's saving presence - in the babe in the manger.

That's the message today's Gospel solemnly proclaims. First John raises our minds to the awesome divine majesty of the Word of God. He is truly the eternal God, the creator of heaven and earth. One of the reasons John calls him the 'Word of God' is because he came to reveal the Father and show us the way to happiness with him.

Having raised our minds and hearts to reflect on the sublime glory of the Word of God, John then brings us down to earth. He tells us the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us. That should bring us up with a jolt!

Almighty God, the creator of heaven and earth, has become a creature. Now he is forever part of the human race, forever committed to us. God could not have paid us humans a greater compliment than by becoming one of us.

He who is all-powerful, upon whom everything depends for its very existence, became a baby, dependent upon his creatures for his basic needs. Almighty God made himself weak and vulnerable to our love or our rejection. In Jesus the unapproachable God of majesty and glory could be embraced with love or nailed to a cross.

We cannot begin to appreciate the wonder of Christmas if we forget that the babe born at Bethlehem never ceased to be almighty God. That's why we adore baby Jesus.

John then tells us that the Word incarnate came among his own people but they didn't welcome him. Sadly, today many people are not interested in the birth of Christ. He means little or nothing

to them. Christmas festivities without Jesus become meaningless opportunities to have a good time, without celebrating anything in particular.

But if we make his birthday the focus of our celebrations he will give meaning to our festivities and a depth to our joy, as we realize that the Son of God joined the family of man, so that we could become the children of God, sharing his own divine life and happiness. So, at Christmas we celebrate not only the birth of Christ, but also our birth as Christians. That gives meaning to our festivities, which otherwise would be empty.

So, as we enjoy ourselves let us remember what we are celebrating - the *birthday of our Savior, the Word of God becoming flesh and dwelling* amongst us. There would be something very wrong if we pushed Jesus into the background on his birthday.

At Christmas it is customary for us to give and receive presents. But do we realize that God has given us the very best of presents - his only Son? All he wants in return is for us to welcome him with love.

I wish you every Christmas blessing and joy!

(Adapted from Rev. Fr Isidore Clarke, O.P. "*Lowly in the manger lies*", 2008)

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