

Homily of Christmas, 2022

Isaiah 9:1-6, Psalm 96:1-3, 11-13; Titus:11-14; Luke 2:1-14

Christmas celebration is the most festive time of the world. While Christians celebrate the commemoration of the birth of Jesus, the effects of the celebration are felt all over the world.

The word 'Christmas,' originates from the Latin phrase *Cristes Maesse*, meaning Christ's Mass.

In the 1960s and 1970s, when I was a child and growing up and Christmas was approaching, the children looked forward to new clothes and shoes which we would wear to attend Mass on Christmas day. The new clothes and shoes were very precious to us. I still remember the excitement of the expectation of Christmas day, and the joy of wearing my Christmas clothes and shoes. Christmas day meals were, also, special. The newness Christmas brought was impressive and remarkable. Now, as an adult, my attention is no longer on new clothes and shoes, and special meals. Rather, my attention is on the spiritual newness the commemoration of the birth of Christ brings. We pray to receive the precious spiritual gifts this Christmas brings to launch us into the new year.

Mary and Joseph travelled 100 miles (161 kilometers), a four-day journey, on foot, from Nazareth to Bethlehem, to register at the census which was ordered by Quirinus, the Roman governor. Scripture tells us that there was no inn for them to lodge in. Therefore, they went to a shed on a farm where Mary gave birth to Jesus. "She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger" (Luke 2:7). We pray for the grace of acceptance, perseverance, and thoughtfulness like Mary and Joseph.

Jesus was born in an animals' shed because human beings could not provide an inn for Mary and Joseph. The commemoration of the birth of Jesus is our opportunity to provide an inn for Jesus to be born again in our life.

The best way to celebrate Christmas is when we embrace the message of peace Jesus, the Prince of Peace, gives to us at Christmas. We have resumed the *Gloria* from Christmas Vigil Mass; "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of goodwill;" first sung by the angels at the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:14). The angels make it clear who receives the peace; "people of goodwill;" not people of bad will. We pray to become people of goodwill so that we may receive Jesus' peace in our hearts, homes, Churches, neighborhoods, communities, countries, and the world, especially the places experiencing violence and war.

Pope Francis gave a beautiful message on Christmas in 2017 which can help in our reflection.

Christmas is usually a noisy party: we could use a bit of silence to hear the voice of Love.

Christmas is you, when you decide to be born again each day and let God into your soul.

The Christmas pine is you, when you resist vigorous winds and difficulties of life.

The Christmas decorations are you, when your virtues are colors that adorn your life.

The Christmas bell is you, when you call, gather, and seek to unite.

You are also a Christmas light, when you illuminate with your life the path of others with kindness, patience, joy, and generosity.

The Christmas angels are you, when you sing to the world a message of peace, justice, and love.

The Christmas star is you, when you lead someone to meet the Lord.

You are also the wise men, when you give the best you have, no matter who.

Christmas music is you when you conquer the harmony within you.

The Christmas gift is you, when you are truly friend and brother of every human being.

The Christmas card is you, when kindness is written in your hands.

The Christmas greeting is you, when you forgive and reestablish peace, even when you suffer.

The Christmas dinner is you, when you give bread and hope to the poor man who is by your side.

You are, yes, Christmas night, when humble and conscious, you receive in the silence of the night the Savior of the world without noise or great celebrations; you are a smile of trust and tenderness, in the inner peace of a perennial Christmas that establishes the Kingdom within you.

A very Merry Christmas for all those who look like Christmas.