

## Homily of Christmas Day Year A

The celebration of Christmas reminds me of "Three Comings of the Lord" according to Bernard of Clairvaux. He says, "We know that there are three comings of the Lord. The third lies between the other two. It is invisible, while the other two are visible. In the first coming he was seen on earth, dwelling among men; he himself testifies that they saw him and hated him. In the final coming all flesh will see the salvation of our God, and they will look on him whom they pierced. The intermediate coming is a hidden one; in it only the elect see the Lord within their own selves, and they are saved. In his first coming our Lord came in our flesh and in our weakness; in this middle coming he comes in spirit and in power; in the final coming he will be seen in glory and majesty."

Today, we are celebrating the first coming. During the Advent, we read from the prophets who foretold his coming. St. John's gospel read in this Mass summarizes the words of the prophets and gives us the meaning of Christmas: "What came to be through him was life, and the life was light of the human race; the light that shines in darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it ...the true light, which enlightens everyone ..., [T]he Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory ... From his fullness we have received, grace in place of grace..." The second reading from Hebrews adds that Jesus "is the refulgence (*the brightness*) of God's glory, the very imprint of his being, and who sustains all things by his mighty word." Prophet Isaiah tells us in the first reading that we are celebrating the coming of the one who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news and announcing salvation. He is our God and King.

While we are participating in the universal merriment of the celebration of Christmas, we need also to reflect on the middle and immediate coming of Christ whereby beyond the merriment of Christmas, Christ wants to come individually to each and everyone, to dwell, to be light that shines in ones darkness, and to give grace in place of grace. Beyond the merriment of Christmas, the Book of Revelation 3:20 says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, [then] I will enter his house and dine with him, and he with me." The gospel today says, "But those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God." While the merriment is going on, let us be attentive, hear his knock and welcome him. Let there be an inn for him in our lives.

If we want Christ to make his dwelling in us; if we want to receive grace in place of grace from him; if we want to see his glory; if we want to be given power reserved for God's children; then we need to open up our darkness, and let in the light of Christ. Each one of us has his or her own darkness that can only be expelled by the light of Christ. This is what I call the spiritual celebration of Christmas. A second type of spiritual celebration of Christmas is to share the light and joy of Christ with someone: the sick, the elderly, the lonely, the hungry, the heartbroken, etc, and make a profound difference in the person's life: If these two types of celebration do not take place, we will only remain at the level of universal merriment. These two types of spiritual celebration of Christmas prepare and equip us for the second coming of Christ.

Bernadette Farrell's hymn "Christ be Our Light" came to my mind as I was concluding this reflection:

Christ, be our light! Shine our hearts. Shine in our darkness.

Christ, be our light! Shine in your Church, gathered today.

**FR. MARTIN EKE, MSP**