

Homily: Christmas 2023

***“How the Gift of Christ coming among Us should change our Lives for the Better”***

I want to welcome all our parishioners, visitors, and all of you who maybe have been away from the Church for whatever reason. Thanks for being here at Holy Mass, and hopefully it will be a new beginning of deepening of our relationship with God and the Church. **Why are we here? And what are we celebrating?** The fact that the eternal Son of God, the 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Blessed Trinity, became a little child, taking on our human nature thru the Blessed Mother by the Holy Spirit, in order for us to share in His Divinity through the power of grace. *He came among us as a little baby to redeem, or lift up and change for the better, every aspect of our human existence, from the moment of conception to the moment of death (remember the sanctity of all human life), because we humans were truly spiritually lost and so desperately in need of His help, and so many are lost again!* *He came among us to teach us the Truth, to show us the narrow way back to God; and then He literally took on our sins and died to set us free from eternal death, from slavery to sin, and liberate us from the power of the devil.* What is our response?

1. **Gratitude?** Is this our gift to the Christ child that I mentioned at the beginning of Advent? Are we grateful for the gift of our Faith? It's one thing to say we are grateful; it's another thing to show it. Do we thank God daily for our lives and the good things in them, or do we focus overly on the negative? Are we willing daily to give our hearts and minds to Him in a deeper way? *We show this practically by living the teachings of our Catholic Faith each day (St. John Paul II story on the Catechism in a time of great confusion); by giving God the due worship each Sunday/Holy Day of obligation by participating in Holy Mass, and not receiving Communion if we have mortal sin on our souls, e.g., missing Mass regularly; and by praying to and loving Him and our fellow man every day.* NOW is the time to change and ask God for the grace since we can't do it on own! It's the Christmas gift Jesus is looking for from us: gratitude and deeper conversion of heart!
2. **Peace?** True peace comes from interior union with God. It is the spiritual fruit of putting things in proper perspective in God's sight. **It is divine harmony!** Divine

peace comes from the grace of God and is the fruit of reconciliation - with God and each other. Are we reconciled to God in our life? Are there some serious sin(s), besides missing Mass, keeping us from God's love? **If so, now is the time to turn things around with God** - He longs for us, esp. those who are far away from Him in their souls! As your pastor, *I am here to help in any way I can to get you spiritually back on track; please contact me, if need be, for Confession, correcting a marriage situation, etc.* Are we estranged from any other human being (s)? Are we full of anger, or hatred, or bitterness toward any family members or other people? It is time to let go of that animosity this Christmas, and give it to God both in prayer and forgiveness (remember forgiveness is primarily in the will, not in the feelings). The reality of reconciliation: *it is Christ who bridges the gap between God and man, between ppl and even within our own hearts.* Christ reveals the meaning and purpose of life: the call to a *deep personal union with the living God which leads to peace, both internally and externally.* Remember there is only war in the world because there is war in individual human hearts – estrangement from God and others - Christ wants to change that!

3. **Walking on the Divine path?** Jesus shows us the way back to God. *Are we willing to let Him show us that narrow path, with childlike openness? Or do we want to do things our way, in pride and stubbornness of heart?!* It is through embracing our Crosses in love and listening to God's Commandments and the teachings of the Catholic Church and embracing them, that we grow in **the obedient faith** to walk on the Divine path which leads to union with the Blessed Trinity, in this life and ultimately in the next. Let's all make a resolution for the coming year to do whatever we need to do, to change whatever we need to change in our lives, to better walk on narrow the Divine path laid out by Jesus beginning on Christmas day some two thousand years ago. Lord, I believe, help my unbelief! St. Joseph and Our Lady, Guardian of the Faith, pray for us. And remember to especially pray at this Mass for the souls in Purgatory because the Lord and Our Lady have told a number of the saints, that more souls are released from Purgatory on Christmas day than any other day of the year! God bless you. ✠