

Cycle C The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

Mass during the Day

Reading I 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.

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

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 dwell in 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.

The church teaches us that the most important feast of the year is Easter, not Christmas. And yet, we don't decorate trees indoors and out at Easter, we don't sing carols at Pentecost or set up Shrines for the feast of Christ the King, or have midnight Mass on the Transfiguration. But at Christmas we do it all. So why do you think we expend such energy on the Christmas feast and celebrate it so lavishly?

While there are many reasons, maybe the central one is that Christmas celebrates the most comforting and yet shocking aspect of our Christian revelations: God became human.

We expect God to be divine and be almighty and all powerful ...and so we have plenty of divinity-centered feasts celebrating Jesus at Easter and the Ascension, at Christ the King and the Transfiguration. But in the whole of our Christian year, we have only two great feasts which seem more focused on the humanity of Jesus: Christmas: when God's humanity is revealed in a manger, and Good Friday, when God's humanity is revealed on a cross. Even though, it's pretty obvious that we prefer the manger over the cross.

Christmas is a feast where images of mother and child, of Angels and shepherds and Wise Men, help us sense the love that God must have for us. We taste something of the passion that God must feel for us. We glimpse something of the communion that God longs to have with us. And the secret here, the Good News here, is that if God has so much love for us, and so much passion for us, maybe we can learn such love, and even passion for God....and for each other...even for those we don't like, we know God so passionately loves them. This is both the great treasure of our Christmas feast and its utmost challenge. For while God has been united with humanity, God is still waiting for our journey to the divine in a world where there is too much violence, where too many people lack basic human needs, and where the dignity of all mankind is plundered. Too often Christmas seems like just a commercialized myth.

So, I would like to offer a special conversation...a prayer, if you will...that I pulled from the lyrics of a favorite Christmas carol. Maybe this will help us embrace what the

scriptures told us about Jesus Christ's humanity and divinity on this joyous Christmas morning:

Mary, did you know that your baby boy, Would one day walk on water?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy, Would save our sons and daughters?

Did you know that your baby boy, Has come to make you new?

This child that you delivered, will soon deliver you!

Mary, did you know that your baby boy, Will give sight to a blind man?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy, Will calm the storm with his hand?

Did you know that your baby boy, Has walked where angels trod?

When you kiss your little baby, You kiss the face of God

Mary, did you know The blind will see, the deaf will hear, The dead will live again,
The lame will leap, the dumb will speak the praises of the Lamb

Mary, did you know that your baby boy, Is our Lord...the Lord of all Creation?

Mary, did you know that your baby boy, Would one day rule the nations?

Did you know that your baby boy, Is Heaven's perfect Lamb?

That sleeping child you're holding, is the Great I Am!

Mary, did you know?

Lord Jesus, may our lips praise you, may our lives proclaim your goodness, may our works give you honor, may our voices celebrate you for ever and ever...and may Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless us all.

And the Church says, AMEN