

Homily – Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) – Year A

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Tonight, we gather in wonder and joy to celebrate the mystery at the heart of our faith: **“The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’”** These words from the Gospel of Matthew are not merely poetry or symbolism; they proclaim a reality that changes everything. Christmas is the night when eternity enters time, when the Creator steps into creation, when God chooses to dwell among His people in the most unexpected way.

So often, Christmas can become crowded with activity—preparations, travel, meals, gifts, and expectations. All of these can be good and beautiful, but they can also distract us from the deeper question Christmas asks: Do we truly believe that God is with us? Not only on Christmas, but in the ordinary and sometimes painful moments of our lives?

Matthew tells the story of Jesus’ birth not from the stable in Bethlehem, but from Joseph's inner struggle. Joseph had a plan: marriage, family, and a quiet, faithful life. When he learns that Mary is pregnant, that plan collapses. He faces confusion, disappointment, and fear. Yet it is precisely there, in that moment of uncertainty, that God enters his life.

The angel says to him, **“Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid.”** Those words echo throughout Scripture. God speaks them to Abraham, to Moses, to the prophets, to Mary, and now to Joseph. God speaks them whenever He invites someone to trust Him beyond what seems reasonable

or safe. Joseph believes the message. He takes Mary into his home. He names the child Jesus. And in doing so, he becomes the guardian of the Redeemer of the world.

Christmas teaches us that faith does not mean having all the answers. Faith means trusting God when the path ahead is unclear. Joseph never speaks a word in the Gospels, yet his obedience speaks louder than many sermons. Through his quiet courage, God enters human history.

And how does God come? Not in wealth, not in power, not in comfort—but as a vulnerable child. Jesus is born not in a palace, but in a stable. He is laid not in a cradle, but in a manger. God chooses poverty so that no human being could ever say, **“God does not understand my life.”** There is no darkness He has not entered, no suffering He has not embraced, no loneliness He has not known.

This is what makes Christmas so radically different from every other celebration. We do not celebrate human success; we celebrate divine humility. We do not celebrate what we have achieved; we celebrate what God has done for us. Emmanuel—God with us—means God with the poor, God with the forgotten, God with the sinner, God with the brokenhearted, God with those who feel far from Him tonight.

For many people, Christmas is a joyful time. But for others, it can be painful. There may be empty chairs at the table, strained relationships, or worries about health, finances, or the future. The message of Christmas is not that everything is perfect, but that God is present. Christ does not wait

for our lives to be in order before He comes. He enters the mess, the uncertainty, the fragility of our human condition.

But Christmas is not only something we remember; it is something we are called to live. Just as Christ came into the world through Mary's "yes" and Joseph's obedience, He wants to come into the world today through us. We become the hands that serve, the voices that speak hope, the hearts that forgive. When we choose mercy over judgment, generosity over indifference, love over fear, the light of Christmas shines again.

In a world deeply divided, the child in the manger reminds us that God's response to violence is peace, His response to hatred is love, His response to fear is closeness. Christmas challenges us to be people of reconciliation, bridge-builders, witnesses to a hope that does not disappoint.

Tonight, as we approach the altar, we come like the shepherds—poor, amazed, and open. We do not bring perfection; we bring ourselves. And that is enough. Because the same Jesus born in Bethlehem comes to us in the Eucharist, still humble, still gentle, still offering Himself completely.

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Let us welcome Emmanuel not only into this church, but into our hearts, our families, and our daily lives. Let us leave this place carrying Christ with us, so that through our words and actions, others may come to know that God is truly with them. **"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests."** Amen.