

In the Name of the Father, and of the ✠ Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

Faith leaps as the ancient Words meet our ears. “And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed.” Caesar Augustus is lost to history. He has gone the way of all flesh. And we do not rejoice at his rule or his taxation. But we know what came to pass in those days. We believe what was accomplished. It is the center and substance of our faith. The ancient Words of St. Luke renew each year our Christmas joy.

We, with the Prophet Isaiah, confess that “...unto us a Son is born, unto us a Son is given...” The Prophet does not stop with “a Son is born”, “a Son is given”. By Divine inspiration he writes “...unto us”, “unto us”. He makes us One with the Church of Old. For He who was the center and substance of the Divine Promises given through the Prophets of Old is the center and substance of our faith. “...unto us a Son is born...”

He is born unto us because He is of our Flesh. There, in Palestine 2000 years ago, He who is Infinite made Himself locally circumscribed in our flesh. The Omnipresent God made Himself present as an Infant. The fulness of the Godhead dwelt in that Infant Son of Mary bodily. He who was before time bound Himself to time, piercing time with eternity.

Not the highest heavens but a stable in Bethlehem was His dwelling place. Not celestial glory but now swaddling cloths encompassed Him. Not the heavenly throne room but a manger now held Him. Not cherubim or seraphim, but now brutish beasts surrounded Him. He who through whom all things were made dwelt among His creatures as one of them. In Mary’s womb the God of heaven was made Man. And now, like any man, He found Himself a helpless Infant, reliant on two of His creatures for food, shelter and protection.

The Apostle teaches of the Incarnation of Christ “The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared...” That is what Mary brought forth – the Incarnate Grace of God, indeed the God of Grace Incarnate. The Flesh He assumed was sinless, not because Mary was sinless, she wasn’t. She was of the Tribe of Judah. Like all the sons of Jacob, Judah had the flesh of Adam. And with that flesh came sin.

But the Flesh Mary’s Son assumed was sinless, because He was conceived and born without human father. The curse of Eden had no hold on Him, through whom the curse was pronounced. He took on flesh to save flesh, to redeem flesh, to make flesh holy once again. Through Him was the Promise of Eden pronounced as well.

That is why His Incarnation and Birth are our Christmas joy. For that – the fulfillment of His Promise - the angelic multitude shattered the darkness with heavenly light, praising God, and proclaiming “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men.”

That glory is God’s alone. For all men have Adam’s flesh. All men sin. So in them is no glory. We are the people the Prophet calls “the people who walked in darkness... those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death.” No angel rejoiced at our birth. For each of us, every man with human father, is conceived and born in sin. We may be wrapped in swaddling cloths, but we are

wrapped more tightly in transgression. And that leads to the very things the Apostle warns against: ungodliness, worldly lusts, and lawless deeds. And those lead only to death.

But tonight, it is ours to rejoice not in death, but in birth, a Divine Birth, the Birth of the Son of God. He who was begotten from eternity, He of whom it is rightly taught that there was not when He was not, in the days of Caesar Augustus, when Quirinius was governor of Syria, He took on flesh and was made Man. He was born of the Virgin Mary. She brought Him forth in time, in Bethlehem, wrapped Him in swaddling cloths and laid Him in a manger.

So join those bewildered shepherds. Join Joseph and Mary. Join the heavenly host. Rejoice! For unto us a Son is born, unto us a Son is given. Christ is born! He is Wonderful, for His work is beyond our imaginings. He is Wonderful, for His benefits to us cause even angels to wonder. He is Counselor, for He mediates between fallen men and Holy God.

He is Mighty, for He conquers sin, death and the devil. He is God, for He is equal to the Father as touching His Divinity. He is God, for He is begotten of the Father before all things. He is Everlasting, for He brings eternity into time. He is without end. His Kingdom is without end. And He is Prince of Peace, for He brings peace between God and man.

That peace He desires you to know. And it is yours, by His grace, simply by believing. He bids you to believe that He took on Flesh for you, that He suffered for you, that He was crucified for you, that He was buried for you, and that He rose again on the third day for you. Believing, everything He won is made yours.

Believing, you are reconciled to God. For unto us a Son is born, to us a Son is given. Believing that, in the Words of the Prophet, you have seen a great light. Believing that, upon you a light has shined. And that Light gives you life. It is He who has redeemed you from every lawless deed, and purified you for Himself as His own special people.

He who alone is holy was born in the Flesh to make flesh holy once again. That He does not by His birth alone, but by His birth, His Holy Sufferings, His Precious Death, and His Glorious Resurrection. Those are the tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. The Babe of Bethlehem, the Son of God born in the City of David, is your Savior.

And this shall be a sign to you: you shall find Him wrapped not in swaddling cloths but in Bread, lying not in a manger but on the Paten. His Name is Wonderful, for He gives you His Body, the Body born of Mary, to eat. His Name is Wonderful, for He gives you His Blood, the Blood in which is His forgiveness, the Blood in which is His life, He gives you His Blood to drink.

So it is that He for whom there was no room in the inn finds room in you. He enters you and dwells in you, sanctifying you, making His holiness, His righteousness, yours by faith in Him. And of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end.

Rejoice, dear Christian, for Christmas joy is yours. Rejoice, for this night the angelic sermon is for you: "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord!"

A blessed Christmas!

St. Luke 2:1-14

The Feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, Midnight Mass, 2020 A.✠ D.

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