

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

Mass during the Night

Grace of God appears.

For a child is born to us.

Glory be to God.

-rvb.

Christ among and within us – wholeness, wisdom, and wonder.

God hurls himself into our world,

Divinity and humanity are joined.

A young woman strains, pushes, and anguishes –

Enfleshing God in Jesus through love.

Joseph nervously places their squirming

newborn on Mary's trembling stomach –

The crib of life.

The shepherds announce to the wise men and women,

“Forget about your gifts, go beyond the material

world to release Christ in the loving presence of angels.”

May our hearts proclaim every day, “He is among

us and He is risen” as much as we allow him to come

forth from womb to tomb. -rvb.

“It is in Jesus that we live, move, and have our being.” Acts 17:28.

A Blessed Christmas and a Healthy New Year - Roger J. Vanden Busch

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

Mass during the Night

Grace of God appears.

For a child is born to us.

Glory be to God.

-rvb.

Reading I

Isaiah 9:1-6

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom
a light has shone.
You have brought them abundant joy
and great rejoicing,
as they rejoice before you as at the harvest,
as people make merry when dividing spoils.
For the yoke that burdened them,
the pole on their shoulder,
and the rod of their taskmaster
you have smashed, as on the day of Midian.
For every boot that tramped in battle,
every cloak rolled in blood,
will be burned as fuel for flames.
For a child is born to us, a son is given us;

upon his shoulder dominion rests.

**They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.**

**His dominion is vast
and forever peaceful,
from David's throne, and over his kingdom,
which he confirms and sustains
by judgment and justice,
both now and forever.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this!**

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

The first section of this familiar reading from Isaiah continues the melancholy strain of the previous chapter 8, "Then they will look to the earth, and see trouble and darkness, gloom of anguish; and they will be driven into darkness." Such it seems like our present economic situation.

Arkansas farmer takes on pro-hunger Republican Senator – "She sees the great light."

"Hallie Shoffner for Senate: Millions of Americans are going hungry without their SNAP benefits, and Senator Tom Cotton thinks they should STAY hungry. He's voted against the Farm Bill - legislation that helps fight hunger in the U.S. - twice because he does not care about feeding people. As a farmer, Hallie Shoffner cares very deeply about feeding people, and she knows the hard way what it means to have to fight like hell for everything you have and STILL get hammered by an economy that's rigged against you — a system rigged by people like Tom Cotton. As senator, she will fight that rigged system every day." -Internet.

However, those walking in darkness are to see a great light. A child is the only hope for Israel and the world. He will be the Prince of Peace when he

ushers in his reign, “of the increase of His government and peace.” When he ascends “the throne of David,” all promises and prophecies related to Israel will be realized. One only has to listen to Handel’s “Messiah” whose music injected Isaiah 9 with intimations of heavenly transcendence. In the fullness of time came to us as Emmanuel – God’s son and Mary’s child as Handel reminds us, “For Unto Us a Child is Born.”

R. (Lk 2:11) Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Sing to the LORD a new song;

sing to the LORD, all you land.

Sing to the LORD; bless his name.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 96: 1-2, 2-3, 11-12, 13.

R. (Lk 2:11) Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Sing to the LORD a new song;

sing to the LORD, all you land.

Sing to the LORD; bless his name.

R. Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Announce his salvation, day after day.

Tell his glory among the nations;

among all peoples, his wondrous deeds.

R. Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice;

let the sea and what fills it resound;

let the plains be joyful and all that is in them!

Then shall all the trees of the forest exult.

R. Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

They shall exult before the LORD, for he comes;

for he comes to rule the earth.

He shall rule the world with justice

and the peoples with his constancy.

R. Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

Reading II

Titus 2:11-14

Beloved:

The grace of God has appeared, saving all

**and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires
and to live temperately, justly, and devoutly in this age,
as we await the blessed hope,**

the appearance of the glory of our great God

and savior Jesus Christ,

**who gave himself for us to deliver us from all lawlessness
and to cleanse for himself a people as his own,
eager to do what is good.**

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

Titus reminds us to maintain our focus on Jesus and not to be distracted by the glitter and litter of consumerism. Titus is concerned about the theological underpinnings such as sound doctrine, faith, and speech. We have two lives past and present. Titus encourages us to live soberly in the present (life within), righteously (life without), and Godly (life upward.) Not everyone has such a spiritual disposition. Just a few days before Christmas two ladies were looking into a department store window at a display of figurines depicting Jesus, Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and animals. Disgustedly, one lady commented, “Look at that, the church is trying to horn in on Christmas!”

Alleluia

Luke 2:10-11

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

I proclaim to you good news of great joy:

today a Savior is born for us,
Christ the Lord.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

[Luke 2:1-14](#)

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus
that the whole world should be enrolled.
This was the first enrollment,
when Quirinius was governor of Syria.
So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town.
And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth
to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem,
because he was of the house and family of David,
to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child.
While they were there,
the time came for her to have her child,
and she gave birth to her firstborn son.
She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger,
because there was no room for them in the inn.

Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields
and keeping the night watch over their flock.

**The angel of the Lord appeared to them
and the glory of the Lord shone around them,
and they were struck with great fear.**

The angel said to them,
“Do not be afraid;
for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy
that will be for all the people.

**For today in the city of David
a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord.**

And this will be a sign for you:

**you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes
and lying in a manger.”**

**And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel,
praising God and saying:**

“Glory to God in the highest

and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

A reflection, exegesis, and commentary on the scriptures.

It is interesting and surprising to some when the two Infancy Narratives from Luke and Matthew are compared side by side, and what about Mark and John, they do not have such narratives. The theology is similar, but the trappings are different. Matthew has Jesus born in a home, visited by Magi, and illumined by a dancing star in the East. Luke’s Jesus is born in a cave, visited by shepherds, and serenaded by hosts of angels. Underneath the layers of storytelling, a child is born, the Word is made flesh, and God is with us. Luke hints at the Resurrection of Jesus as she wraps him in swaddling clothes and places him in a manger. This child will be triumphant over death, though he will suffer and die. He will be a man of peace who will gather his friends around a table for a meal where he will share the flesh and blood he became on Christmas day.

There is a story about an angel who appeared to a peasant, saying: “God wishes to reveal Himself to you in whatever manner you desire. How do you wish to see God. Scratching his head and puzzling a long while, the peasant finally replied, “I am a poor man and not worthy to see God face to face. But if it is His will to show Himself to me, let it be in those things that are familiar to me. Let me see God in the earth I plough, the water I drink, the food I eat. Let me see God in the faces of my family, friends, and neighbors.”

Christmas gives birth to us in guidelines for a spiritual life:

1. Where the action in life is, God is present and active in the daily activities of our lives – the Word made flesh.
2. God often appears in human form. Emmanuel.
3. Prayer is practicing the presence of God.
4. God's will for us is found within our own deepest desires.
5. God can be imaged and imagined in countless ways, no image being adequate to the mystery of the Incarnation.

Final prayer: “God on high, your son Jesus is born, not in perfect conditions, but in willing hearts. Jesus is among and within us. He is near as our breath, and as alive as the beating of our hearts. Amen.

Our family wishes you and your loved one's joy, peace, and love – Roger J. Vanden Busch.