

Christmas: Midnight Mass

Gospel text (Lk 2,1-14): At that time the emperor issued a decree for a census of the whole empire to be taken. This first census was taken while Quirinus was governor of Syria. Everyone had to be registered in his own town. So everyone set out for his own city; Joseph too set out from Nazareth of Galilee. As he belonged to the family of David, being a descendant of his, he went to Judea to David's town of Bethlehem to be registered with Mary, his wife, who was with child. They were in Bethlehem when the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her firstborn. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in the manger, because there was no place for them in the living room.

There were shepherds camping in the countryside, taking turns to watch over their flocks by night. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared to them, with the Glory of the Lord shining around them. As they were terrified, the angel said to them, «Don't be afraid; I am here to give you good news, great joy for all the people. Today a Savior has been born to you in David's town; He is the Messiah and the Lord. Let this be a sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger». Suddenly the angel was surrounded by many more heavenly spirits, praising God and saying, «Glory to God in the highest; peace on earth for God is blessing humankind».

«Today a Savior has been born to you in David's town; he is the Messiah and the Lord»

Fr. Ramon Octavi SÁNCHEZ i Valero
(Viladecans, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, the Savior has been born. This is the good news of this Christmas eve. Like in every Christmas, Jesus is born again in the world, in each home, in our heart.

But unlike what our consumerist society celebrates, Jesus is not born in an environment of waste, purchases, comfort, whim and meals. Jesus is born in the humility of the Nativity scene.

And he does it this way because he has been refused by men: nobody had wanted to house them, neither in homes nor in hostels. Mary, Joseph and the just born Jesus felt what rejection, lack of generosity and of solidarity mean.

Later on things will change with the Angel's announcement: «Don't be afraid; I am here to give you good news, great joy for all the people. Today a Savior has been born to you in David's town; he is the Messiah and the Lord» (Lk 2:10). Everybody will run towards the Nativity scene in order to adore the Son of God. A bit like in our society where many people are marginalized, because they are poor, aliens or simply different from us, while we celebrate Christmas speaking words of peace, solidarity and love.

We Christians are joyous today, we are rightfully happy. As Saint Leo the Great said: «There is no place for sadness now that life has been born». But we can not forget that Jesus' birth means a commitment for us all: living Christmas in the most similar way as the Holy Family lived it. That is, no ostentation, no unnecessary expenses. Celebrating and having a party is compatible with austerity and even with poverty.

On the other hand, if we do not have true feelings of solidarity towards those who have been rejected, aliens or homeless people during these days, it is because we are like the inhabitants of Bethlem: we do not welcome the infant Jesus in our hearts.

MASS AT DAWN (Gospel: Lk 2:15-20) «Found Mary and Joseph with the baby lying in the manger»

Fr. Bernat GIMENO i Capín
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, a light will shine on us: the Lord is born for us! Just as the Sun rises every morning to light up and enliven our world, this Christmas Mass at Dawn, when still quite murky, calls forth the figure of the small Infant born at Bethlehem as a rising Sun that rises to illuminate the human family.

After Mary and Joseph, those shepherds of the Gospel were the first ones to be enlightened by the presence of the Infant Jesus. Those shepherds, that were meant to be the last ones in their society. We also have to become shepherds to welcome the Infant, while realizing our own nothingness.

That Jesus is light cannot leave us unconcerned. Let us look at the shepherds: the joy they felt for what they had seen was so great they could not stop talking about: «And all were astonished on hearing the shepherds» (Lk 2:19).

«Your Saviour comes», the prophet tells us, and we are filled up with joy and peace. Dear brothers, this is what we are lacking now a days: to be able to speak about Him with joy, peace and conviction; each one of us from his/her own vocation, that is, from the eternal design God has “for me”. And this will only be possible if we are previously convinced of our identity: the lay, the monastic and the priests. We all form “the holy people” prophet Isaiah speaks about.

It was God's design the shepherds went to worship the Infant Jesus. We are all shepherds too. We must be poor and humble, the very last ones... When we look at the manger at home, with its plastic or ceramic shepherds, we see an image of the Church, which the prophet in the first lecture describes as a “city that is not forsaken” and calls “My Delight” (cf. Is 62:4-12). This Christmas we have to set up our mind upon loving more our Church... which is not ours, but His, and which we receive and go into to participate as unworthy servants. Our Church, which we receive as a gift, as an unmerited present. This is why, this coming Christmas, our outburst of joy must be a sincere and profound thanksgiving.