The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas): Mass during the Night

Gospel text (*Lk* 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 Messiah 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."

«For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and 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

solidarity mean.

Later on things will change with the Angel's announcement: “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 Messiah and 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 cannot 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 Bethlehem: we do not welcome the infant Jesus in our hearts.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Let us then give thanks to God the Father, through His Son, in the Holy Spirit, Who for His great mercy, wherewith He has loved us, has had pity on us: and when we were dead in sins, has quickened us together in Christ, that we might be in Him a new creation.” (Saint Leo the Great)

- “On this day, Jesus, the Savior is born of the Virgin Mary. Let us worship God’s goodness made flesh, and let us allow tears of repentance to fill our eyes and cleanse our hearts. This is something we all need!.” (Francis)

- “Jesus was born in a humble stable, into a poor family. Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event. In this poverty heaven's glory was made manifest. The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night: ‘The Virgin today brings into the world the Eternal and the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible. The angels and shepherds praise him and the magi advance with the star, For you are born for us, Little Child, God eternal!” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 525)

Other comments

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

Fr. Bernat GIMENO i Capín
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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: “All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds” (Lk 2:19).

“Your Savior comes,” the prophet tells us, and we are filled with joy and peace. Dear brothers, this is what we are lacking nowadays: 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 our mind upon loving our Church more... which is not ours, but His, and which we receive and go into participating 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.