

Christmas 2020

Scriptures: Isaiah 9:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14

Homily: Fr. Ken

At Christmas throughout the world, we are all gathered together to celebrate the birthday of a person, a very special person, who considers each one of us to be his best friend.

The birth of Jesus takes us back in history 2,000 years ago. But it is not that far from us today. Mary and Joseph were a homeless couple with a newborn child born in a stable.

Christmas proclaims the Incarnation, that God is among us, as one of us. It is a mystery so all-encompassing; it is invisible like DNA, the organizing principle of evolution itself. To be, is to be: in God, of God, for God. Jesus arrives not to bring this, but to reveal it.

Our humanity has a divine destiny. Our hunger for identity, purpose, and meaning is the answer to a question seeded in our consciousness, reflected in our dignity, and grounded in the image and likeness of God. It challenges any idea that history is about winners and losers, the survival of the fittest. It insists that every life matters not because it can be monetized, but because it is essential to the wholeness and ultimate glory of God's body in the world, the Christ of Christmas.

Every life matters in every city, town, village, barrio, slum, or refugee camp. Every life lost diminishes us all. Every death before its time, every child born into poverty, denied basic health care, food, clean water, education, opportunity, impoverishes us all. The life we save is our own, a member of the one family we need to be fully human.

We hold this mystery up against the front page, each day's litany of self-destruction. But as Church, we are in this world, not against it, and our only interface is this:

"The joys and hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the people of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ. Indeed, nothing genuinely human fails to raise an echo in their hearts".

These are the opening lines of the Second Vatican Council's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, with the Latin title "*Gaudium et Spes*" meaning "Joy and Hope".

"Joy and Hope" are the message of Christmas to a troubled and tired world. "Joy and Hope" are a rallying cry and a gathering place for anyone eager for a fresh start in life, for anyone seeking healing and renewal toward a future that is more fair, humane, respectful of every life, its gifts and potential welcomed and nurtured.

But it remains a formidable challenge. For Jesus, the way forward met a gauntlet of lethal blows that protect every status quo, the logic that it is always better for one person to die than bring down the system. That one has been multiplied by millions in wars waged with expendable lives and collateral carnage under the wheels of history.

Jesus formed community among the crucified of history and there he proclaimed love triumphs death, and that reconciliation will reclaim the fragments of a broken world.

The Incarnation is both pure grace and a work in progress. Christmas has yet to find a home in many hearts, or a voice within the virtual search engines that read our desires and mirror our wants. Advent is our annual wakeup call, to not be seduced by false gods and the many pseudo salvations competing for our souls.

Whatever our past failures and future anxieties, God is always in the present moment, and all things are possible.

Let this blessed assurance be the first gift of Christmas, to yourself and to everyone you love or will love in the days to come.

A different world is possible. A different world is necessary. We are in this together, the one body of humanity, animated by one Holy Spirit, a living, breathing solidarity of shared purpose, God among us, in us, for us.

It is a mystery so much bigger than any of us, but one that needs each of us to be complete.

It is the joy and hope of Christmas that brings true happiness.