

[Isaiah 52:7-10; Psalm 98; Heb. 1:1-6; Luke 2:1-14]

Merry Christmas! Welcome to all who join us tonight/today: parishioners, especially those who join us from other parishes and for whom this is their first, second or third Christmas at St. Martin de Porres Parish; to students and military and former parishioners who have “come home for Christmas,” and to those who are searching for a spiritual home. We hope you will find it here.

Once upon a time, someone decided to make their annual retreat at Christmas time at the nearby monastery. Having had a wonderful spiritual experience, they were leaving the monastery to head home, suitcase in hand. They passed one of the monks on the way to the parking lot. “Merry Christmas!” they eagerly said to the monk.

“May Christ be born in you,” came the reply from the monk.

“May Christ be born in you.” Wouldn’t that be a wonderful way to say to one another, “Merry Christmas?” “May Christ be born in you?”

Has Christ been born in you? The answer to that question will make or break your Christmas celebration.

The very purpose of our gathering is to adore our God because we recognize the mystery of God's love. It is because we recognize and understand that we are able to fall to our knees before this manifestation of God's love. Think about that night when he was born. The inn was full of people, yet none of them came to see the child. The town was full of activity and yet none of them saw the angels, witnessed a star or wondered why this group of shepherds were leaving their flocks behind to come and see a child. Their blindness to what was happening prevented them from adoring the new born king. So the question arises for us, are we too blind to see? Have we come to adore because we recognize the mystery? May Christ be born in you.

Each Christmas for us brings us back to a simple scene where we come face to face with a poor family, a little child and the mystery of divine love. God could have chosen to manifest Christ as a full grown man with no known origin, but rather Christ is given to us as a child in a humble situation, one that is approachable and without pretense. Why? Because God wants us to draw near without hesitation and to be absorbed into his profound love for us. It is not God who seeks to push us away but to draw us in. It is God who has given us the greatest gift wrapped in swaddling clothes and laying in a manger.

It is the one and almighty God who came to encounter us so that we could encounter Him. Is there any greater gift of humble love than what is manifest in today's mystery? How can we be untouched, unmoved by this love? In the same way the rest of the people of Bethlehem were that day. They too were absorbed not in mystery, but in the daily struggles of life. They too were consumed with their own needs and failed to see what was around them. Like the people of Bethlehem over 2000 years ago we can get so wrapped up in the stuff of life that we fail to see what is the point of life. May Christ be born in you.

Was the Son of God really born so that we can encounter in a profound way the presence of God Himself? If we say yes, then we have to ask ourselves; how often do we come to adore Him? Do we, like the shepherds leave all things behind to rejoice in this mystery? The shepherds did go back to their flocks and continued to live their lives, but they took time out to adore the King of Kings and so should we. We should pause each and every week from our lives to adore and be renewed by the mystery of God's presence in and around us.

Look around you in the world and see if we are at peace without Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Look around you and see if there is good will towards others and how can there be if we do not have the Author of all that is good in our lives? Look around and see if there is true love and how can there be if we do not have the Source of love within us? This Christmas can be different if we all take the time to kneel before the manger scene not because others are doing it, but because we look at it as if for the first time in our lives and see something more than just a poor family surrounded by animals, but a family with Christ at the center of it. May Christ be born in you.

This is my Christmas Prayer for you.

“May the peace of God and the freshness of the Holy Spirit rest in your thoughts, rule in your dreams tonight, and conquer all your fears.

May God manifest himself today in ways you have never experienced.

May your joys be fulfilled, your dreams be closer, and your prayers be answered.

I pray that faith enters a new height for you; I pray for peace, healing, health, happiness, prosperity, joy, true and undying love for God.”

“And the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.”

Merry Christmas! And “may Christ be born in you this day!” AMEN!