

Well, didn't the children do a wonderful job of illustrating our Christmas story for us tonight!

Thank you so much, boys and girls.

I think it really helps us to see things right in front of us to help us understand what's going on, instead of just listening to the words. Psychologists tell us that 70% of us use a visual channel to take in information and learn and while some like to close their eyes and listen, many to prefer to see things happen.

Christmas is known as the season of light, when the light comes into the world, and the light came into the world as a child and we are called to see the world around us in a new way, in that new light, to see things as children so that when we see things differently, we might change the way we act to one another.

We use light in so many things we do. I remember a story of a little girl who went to the doctor just before Christmas. He brought out his little light and to help her relax, he said "I'm going to shine this light in your ear, do you think I'll see an elf in there?" The little girl shook her head.

Then he asked her to open her mouth and said, "Do you think I'll see a reindeer in there?" The little girl shook her head.

Then he took out his stethoscope and put in on her chest and said, "Do you think I'll hear Santa in there?" This time the little girl said, "NO! Jesus lives in my heart, Santa is on my socks!"

And so we often see the wisdom of Children and wish we could see things in the same simple and straightforward way that they do.

Light is an important part of Christmas, we use the burning yule log as a symbol of Christmas, we're more likely to have a fire in the fireplace at Christmas, we put lights on our trees and our houses because Christmas comes at the darkest time of the year with the longest nights and we all want to banish the darkness and live in the light.

A teacher once asked the small children in the Sunday school class a question. "How can you tell when night is over and dawn has come?" One of the children who lived on a farm said, "When you can the difference between a cow and a deer from far away, then you know it's dawn!"

The teacher said, "Very good answer!"

Another little girl, who lived by an orchard said, "When you can tell the difference between a peach blossom and an apple blossom across the yard, then you know the dawn has come!"

The teacher said, "Another good answer!"

Then the littlest child in the class spoke up and said, "When you can look in someone's face and see that God is there, then the light has come and the darkness is gone!"

And the teacher didn't have to say anything.

Christmas gives us a light to see others as children of God, as our own brothers and sisters, as members of that one universal family that we call the people of God.

Jesus is not just the light of the world, our light, but he is our teacher too, and he began teaching us from the moment he was born, even as a baby in the manger, not just as a grown-up preacher.

By being born small and helpless, in poverty and homeless, he showed us how God sees things in his light - that earthly wealth and power mean little to him.

By having the angels call the shepherds to be the first to see him, those poor nomads of the fields that everyone else shunned, he showed us that all of us are important in his eyes and things like class and nobility are unimportant.

By being born in Bethlehem, a little town whose name means "House of Bread", instead of in Rome or Jerusalem or the great cities, he showed us that he was truly the bread of life who would feed us all throughout all time in our deep spiritual need with his own body as the bread of life.

When we come forward tonight to receive the true body of Christ in Holy Communion, we can ask him to help us strip away all the complications, all the excuses, and let us see the world as children again.

We often talk about how the way we behave at Christmas time changes, for a few days, or if we are very blessed, maybe for a few weeks and how we wish we could keep our hearts in that same place all the year around.

We may struggle during the rest of the year with some of the difficult lessons that Jesus the man teaches us in our scriptures at weekly mass, but the lesson of Christmas is that the first lessons and the most important lessons come from remembering that little child bathed in the light of the star in that first Christmas.

Pope Benedict said, "Christ became a child, so that the Word could be understood by us. In this way God teaches us to love the little ones. In this way he teaches us to love the weak. In this way he teaches us respect for children. The child of Bethlehem directs our gaze towards all children who suffer and are abused in the world, the born and the unborn."

So why do those feelings fade so quickly. Why don't we try this for as a challenge?

Take your calendar for next year, 2018, you know the one you're going to track your monthly payments on, and go through it month by month and in the box for the first day, draw a little manger with a star above it. Even if you're not a good artist, just a little picture. Do it with the whole family watching or take turns drawing the picture. Do it now before the new year begins.

If you use an electronic calendar, then I'll bet you can find a little manger and star emoji to copy there where you won't miss it.

Then take some time on that first day of each month, when you see that little picture, to pray and remember your Christmas feelings and ask yourself, "What can I do this month to bring the light of Christmas to the world around me?" and I promise you that the Holy Spirit will bring that Christmas feeling back into your heart and show you what to do.

We can look for ways to share, to spread the good news, and to keep bringing peace to the world. We can do it if we listen to the little child who was born our Wonderful Counselor and show him that we can learn to be, and live, like little children too.