

The Nativity of the Lord
December 25, 2019
“The Way Through Hardship and Struggle”

Is 9:1-6
Tit 2:11-14
Lk 2:1-14

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

No matter what we do or how we plan, life always seems to be a struggle. Even if things seem easy for the moment – often, that moment is very short-lived.

There are many different areas in which we can struggle. We can have difficulty physically, emotionally, interpersonally, financially, and spiritually – because human beings are complex creatures. And because life, itself, is also complex, what others do around us or in the world always has an impact upon us! Consequently, it is easy to get angry, discouraged, and depressed – because the struggle is on-going.

Unfortunately, it is a very human tendency to make our problem someone else’s problem or responsibility. Hence, we often try to blame others for our difficulty. Moreover, it’s all too easy to resort to selfish measures to make things better for ourselves!

However, God did not make us this way. God created us for joy, bliss, and love. The world and human life become such a struggle because, originally, we wanted to be supreme ourselves. We wanted things our own selfish way and the result was a broken world!

No one escapes the hardships and the struggles of life. But the solution is not violence toward others or nihilism in ourselves. The solution is always to look to God – and to the one God sent.

Jesus came to teach us how we must live amid all that life throws at us. Moreover, those close to Jesus, or to God Himself, witness for us how we must become in our own soul and spirit.

Mary and Joseph certainly had it rough – a grueling journey of 90 miles on foot, from Nazareth to Bethlehem – no available accommodations – or even a suitable place to give birth. Temporarily homeless, they found a stable for the night, and Mary had to use a feeding trough with straw as a crib for her newborn son. Nevertheless, they made the best of things and rejoiced in the birth of their son and in each other’s mutual love.

The shepherds were, basically, homeless people who had a worse than minimum wage kind of job. Dirty, unkempt, unwashed, bedraggled, ostracized, and unwanted everywhere – they were the ones to whom the angel came and who heard the heavenly choir. Having nothing, they were given the priceless gift of meeting the Savior who would prepare a place for them beyond the hardships and struggles of this world.

In all likelihood, life did not change for the shepherds after their divine encounter. But they were changed. They were empowered to survive their hard life with a new grace, a new purpose, and a new hope!

Brothers and Sisters, God did not send His Son into the world to change the status quo of its brokenness or to eliminate our struggle for existence. God sent His Son to show us how to bear with the hardships of life. Jesus came to enable us to change the kind of person we are. The peace of which Isaiah speaks and the elimination of violence will be in the world to come. Yet it can exist in our hearts and spirits, even now – today and every day – Because Jesus truly is the Wonder-Counselor, the God-Hero, the Father-Forever, and the Prince of Peace!

However, as St. Paul urges, we must reject all that is godless in our lives and hearts – all that is worldly and unworthy of us. We must try to live as true disciples of Jesus – Jesus who is everything and who gives us more than we can ever imagine! Since, as someone once said: “Life is a struggle toward greater being”, we must truly become people who are eager to do all that is good for others and for the world. This is incumbent upon us, even though so many others and the world are resistant and even hostile to God and to the gift that God sent in Jesus.

So, let us pray on this wonderful day that we can allow the grace and the mystery of Christmas to touch us and change us – May we see and hear and understand what we did not before – May we have a newfound hope – And may we face the hardships and struggles of life as did Jesus and countless others who have gone before us!

Amen.

December 25, 2019

Msgr. Russell G. Terra