

2000 years ago. A dark, cold silence was broken. The illumination, the Light, very God of Very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father. The Light shown forth and into the world.

This very night. A dark, cold silence was broken. The illumination, the Light shown forth and into this place. The first Service held here, 10 years ago tonight, amazing all the Lord has worked, has taken place.

This place, this House is built because God takes on our flesh, born of Mary. To pastor and peoples -unworthy, undeserving, without any merit in us, He comes for sinners, here. For sinners, for you get caught up in all the wrong things; distracted by trinkets with no value while the treasures of His kingdom are before you. You get swallowed up with fear of what may happen and terrible news. You don't know who to believe, who to ignore. You feel alone even with screens filled with family and friends. You have an unquenchable longing that can only be satisfied in a Savior born for you.

The story of our salvation is not new. We know it well. This Christ, God Himself, delivering on the promise He spoke with Adam and Eve; visited Abraham to deliver, covenant for His people; spoke to Moses from burning bush and carved His commands on hearts of stone and answers for their sins. This Christ confronts Jacob to meet His people in their wounds and brokenness. In a fiery furnace He will not let a hair upon His peoples head perish. In pillar of cloud and fire the Christ present to bring His people through exodus and crush their enemies. This one God, did not watch and grieve over His people from afar but enters our history by His incarnation of Virgin Mary.

The story of our salvation is not new. We know it well. A Virgin and manger, with angels, shepherds, the sound of a baby's cry into the night. We know where the Child is headed, to Jerusalem and His glory lifted on a cross. You are the reason, so the Lord builds His house here; comes to wrap Himself around us, to cover us with His blood, to clothe us with His righteousness, to lift us from this body of death, that you would never, ever die.

Perhaps this year more than most years, receive deeper joy, meaning in the good news of the Christmas message. No Christmas has come to us with everything in place, everyone on their best behavior, all the right gifts and food, all the right people gathered, with all of family able to gather. Christ is born, comes precisely because of what is wrong and not because of anything good or right; come as Savior of a people who need rescue -not in the least from ourselves and self-absorbed lives.

Every Christmas, people of God gather with their wounds and wonder, their fears and laughter, their sorrows and struggles. The world is evil. Our flesh is weak. Our families are a mess. That is why this church is built here.

To you who are weary, who feel the burden of your sins: To you is born a Savior, who Himself bears your heavy load, carries you, makes you His holy child.

To you who stray, struggle with doubts, follow the advice of the world. To you is born a Savior, a Shepherd to restore you to the flock that you dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

To you who struggle to live up to promises, who have so many scars, who have people fail you, betray you, who yourself fail and hurt those you love. To you is born a Savior who comes to bind up your wounds, to undue your past, gives you a future, all the while He attends to every detail in your life.

To you who are broken, depressed, lonely, ridden with guilt, who feel useless, hopeless. To you is born a Savior, who's near to the brokenhearted, saves the crushed in spirit, whose heart will be pierced on the cross to mend you in His daily works. God in the flesh, so that your flesh, your life has immeasurable worth.

To you fearful, struggling with afflictions. To you is born a Savior, who will go through the valley of the shadow of death to bring you through it all and into the light of resurrection of the body and eternity.

To you who mourn, ache because you cannot have 'Christmas just like the ones we use to know'. To you is born a Savior, who restores all things, makes all things new. That you will hear the voice of your loved one, your grandpa, grandma in the faith, feel their embrace and celebrate Christmas with them again in heaven.

God, Christmas is still found where He promised to be. Here, the Savior lives in the voice of His Word, in the absolution of sins, in baptismal waters continually working in you His death and resurrection, in the preached Gospel to ears longing for hope and truth, in His very body and blood of His supper. It is what Jesus says it is, does what Jesus says it does. Here, heaven and earth come together as in no other way on earth.

Christ comes born for you. And this Church is built for you to be joined to Him, joined to heaven. You are the reason for all of it. Rest in the grace of His Holy Sacraments. Bask in His works of forgiveness and life that has no end. God quiet all your fears. Frohe Weihnachten. Merry Christmas.