

Church of the Divine Love

CHRISTMAS DAY

DECEMBER 25, 2021

10:15 AM

HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

Please observe silence after the candles are lit

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn **#100 – Joy to the world!**

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung) page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Isaiah 9:2-7**

Psalm 96

Second Lesson: **Titus 2:11-14**

Gradual Hymn **#87 – Hark! the herald angels sing**

Gospel: **Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze

Nicene Creed page 358

General Thanksgivings pages 836, 837

Confession of Sin page 360

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn **#96 – Angels we have heard on high**

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

Eucharistic Prayer B page 367

Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal) page 362

The Lord's Prayer page 364

The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer page 337

The Communion of the People

Communion Hymn – **#105 – God rest ye merry, gentlemen**

Post Communion Prayer page 365

Prayer for Peace – on insert

Prayer of St. Francis page 833

Dismissal Hymn **#83 – O come all ye faithful vs. 1,2,3, &6**

Sermon Christmas Eve, December 24, 2021

Isaiah 9: 2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2: 11-14; Luke 2: 1-14 (15-20)

Sisters and brothers in Christ,

It began about nine months ago. Life was interrupted when the unexpected and unimaginable happened. And I wondered, "How can this be?" Life was changing and things were getting too real too quick. The government issued travel decrees. Some family, friends, and businesses closed to us and said, no, you can't come in. So much has changed. Things just aren't like they used to be. They probably never will be. It feels like it's been one interruption after another.

I'm talking about the angel Gabriel interrupting Mary's day and saying, Greetings, favored one. The Lord is with you.... You will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. I'm talking about Mary interrupting Joseph's Day to tell him she was pregnant. I'm talking about the angel and dreams that interrupted Joseph's sleep. I'm talking about Emperor Augustus's travel decree and that trip to Bethlehem that interrupted Mary and Joseph's life in Nazareth. I'm talking about how their plans in Bethlehem got interrupted "because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7). I'm talking about the angel's announcement that interrupted the shepherds' nightly work. I am talking about the shepherds interrupting Mary's recovery after childbirth. I am talking about the child that interrupted the ways and life of the world. I'm talking about Christmas "in those days" (Luke 2:1) and in these days.

Christmas comes not in spite of the interruptions, but by way of the interruptions. It did in those days, and it does in these days too. And I wonder what interruptions have come into your life the past nine months. The pandemic might be the first interruption you think of, but I hope you won't let it be the last or the only one you think of. Interruptions come to us all the time and in a thousand different ways.

Some are welcome, others are not. Some are completely unexpected and take us by surprise, others are desired and prayed for. It could be a knock on the door or a phone call, a sudden insight or new understanding, a dream or an event that changes the routines and rhythms of your life. It could be a new opportunity, running into an old friend or making a new one. It could be the death of a loved one, the birth of a child, a marriage, an illness, a failure or disappointment, a divorce, losing a job, finding a job, retiring from a job. It could be news you never wanted to hear or news you had waited and hoped for.

Some interruptions are mere nuisances or inconveniences. Some are life changing. And some are needed and necessary. Some interruptions give us something and others take something from us. Some ask us to take on something new and others ask us to leave behind something old or familiar. So, let me ask you again, what has interrupted your life in the last nine months? Every interruption sets choices before us. Every interruption asks us for a response. Despite her confusion and lack of understanding, Mary responded, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word. And Joseph? He took Mary as his wife, but not before first having "planned to dismiss her quietly. Then he went to be registered with Mary in Bethlehem according to the emperor's decree.

Though terrified by the angel standing before them, the shepherds left their fields and went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. And Mary responded to the shepherds with silence, but she treasured all their words and pondered them in her heart. Here's the thing that strikes me about each of their responses. Each response was an opening, not a closing. Each response held the door open for life and more life. Each response was an opening to the future and the possibility of something new, the chance of something different, something that would transform the present into something else.

So, here's what I wonder. What if each interruption in our life is a visitation breaking in and prying open the present moment in order to stop or at least slow down our life so that we might take account, pay attention, wake up? What if each interruption in our life is a holy space, a manger cradling possibilities we have never before considered, imagined, or thought possible? So let me ask you this. How are you receiving the interruptions in your life and what are you doing with them? Are you closing yourself to them? Are you angry, resentful, resistant? Are you being stubborn? Are you blaming someone else, or saying how unfair it is? Are you living in fear or unwilling to change? Are you ignoring or running away from the interruptions? Are you refusing to look at, listen to, or discover what might be waiting to be born in you?

Or are you opening to the interruptions in your life? Are you asking yourself what they might be telling or offering you? Are you letting them recenter and reorient your life? Are you looking for what might be gestating and growing in them? Are you letting them point, guide, and nudge you to new possibilities and different ways of being? Are you letting something be birthed in you? In every age the Christmas story is a story of opening to the interruptions. It was on the first Christmas, and it is today. It was for Mary, Joseph, and the shepherds, and it is for you and me. Somehow through the interruptions of our lives the child is born anew. I can't tell you how that happens. I don't know. I don't understand it any better than did Mary, Joseph, or the shepherds. I only know that when we open ourselves to the interruptions Christmas happens. Light interrupts darkness, peace interrupts chaos, hope interrupts despair, love interrupts hate, and life interrupts death.

It's no coincidence that this day and this thing that has happened bring us to this child. They did for the shepherds too. This child is not just any child, but he is every child. This child is you and me. This child is the hungry and thirsty, the sick, the imprisoned, the poor, the stranger and alien, the weak and powerless. This child is the face of holiness, integrity, and authenticity. This child is the face of all that is good, true, and beautiful. This child holds before us hope and possibility. And this child wants and needs to hold by us. This child is the face of humanity and the face of God. This child is the face of your face. This child is the one who heals and forgives. This child is peace. This child makes joy complete and life abundant. This child is compassion and gentleness. This child is life and more life. This child shows us the way, the truth, and the life. In this child we see ourselves – who we are and who we are becoming. This child is your Christmas life.

That's why I'm here tonight or today. You and I are here tonight or today in response to an invitation that so beautifully interrupted our lives. And we're in the right place. We claim that Child's interruption for ourselves and one another every time we say, Merry Christmas. There's more to those words than you think. With those words we are recognizing that life, joy, hope, love continue to filter through every concern we've brought with us tonight or today and every interruption we've experienced on the way. With those words we are declaring the story of this night or this day and the past nine months to be true. So, I say to you this night or today, through my interrupted life, Merry Christmas, merry Christmas, merry Christmas. **Amen.**

Masks are required during the service.

CHRISTMAS DAY 10:15 AM HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II (also on zoom)

SUNDAY – 1 CHRISTMAS

10:15 AM HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II (also on zoom)

MONDAY 8:00 PM AA MEETING

WEDNESDAY 7:00 PM AL-ANON MEETING

THURSDAY 10AM-2PM THRIFT SHOP

8:00 PM AA MEETING

SATURDAY – JAN. 1ST - HOLY NAME THRIFT SHOP CLOSED

SUNDAY – JAN. 2ND - 2 CHRISTMAS 10:15 AM HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II

(also on zoom)

SUPPORT THE FOOD DRIVE – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

