

Christmas
December 25, 2020
“The Riches of Poverty”

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

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

The present Covid virus has hammered us – as it has hammered nearly everyone else in the world. No one can completely escape its impact upon us physically, emotionally, spiritually, and economically. Everyone is affected in one way or another.

The virus has killed millions. Many hundreds of thousands seem to have lingering, if not permanent, health issues after recovery. Millions have lost their jobs – Thousands have gone out of business – And everyone is limited and restricted to a bare minimum of interpersonal contact. We can't work close to others – We can't visit outside of close family members – We can't go out to lunch, dinner, or see a movie – We can't even go to church!

For the first time in generations – or maybe even in centuries – everyone has a sense of unrecovered loss. Finally, we can all acknowledge that we are poor in some way – that we are truly human – that we can die prematurely – that we desperately need human contact – and that we need love more than anything else in this world! In fact, perhaps for the first time, many have come to realize that they need God! Because “God is Love – and those who abide in Love abide in God – and God abides in them with His Love!”

The faithful few among the Chosen People at the time of the early chapters of Isaiah, no doubt felt much like we do today. They lived in a dark time. They had been oppressed by other nations – They suffered under politically corrupt religious, political leadership – And their culture was bankrupt and pagan. Consequently, in today's scripture passage, Isaiah gave them hope. There would come a time of light – instead of darkness and gloom – a time of deliverance and peace – a time of joy and rejoicing!

They would be given a son who was Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father Forever, and Prince of Peace. He would be the Son of God born into their midst – and he would deliver them from the kingdom of this world into one of everlasting joy, fulfillment, and peace! This promise would give them hope – hope for a future beyond their lifetime – hope for a future that they would experience beyond all space and time!

Mary and Joseph certainly experienced more hardship than we experience today. They were under foreign rule – Their own leaders were legalistic and self-serving – They had to walk the hundred miles to Bethlehem which took 8-10 days – Moreover, Mary was due for child-birth at anytime.

Yet, when they arrived, there was no suitable place for them – no birthing place or midwife helper. There was only a cave-stable! Without family, without friends, they were poor in every way – except in God. For God was with them – And a God-Child would be born to them – Moreover, he would truly be all that Isaiah proclaimed six centuries before!

The shepherds, themselves, were poor in every way – they were homeless, shunned, unwashed, and unkempt. Yet, it was to them that the angels came. They, alone, were told of the Savior's birth – and where he could be found. Thus, the shepherds, who had nothing, became the richest in all the land – For God had truly given them more than everything in the Gift of Himself!

Life would not change for Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. They would continue to experience hardship, exile to Egypt, alienation, and separation from loved ones.

Life did not change for the faithful remnant to whom Isaiah spoke – And it would not change for the shepherds – But they all would be changed. If they remained faithful, then the Grace of God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, would transcend time and envelop them.

They would have hope beyond all the hopes of this world – love, beyond the love which ends with death – all because of Faith – their relationship with the unseen God in their hearts and souls!

Brothers and Sisters, perhaps the Covid virus is a blessing in disguise. Perhaps it is a punishment that God allows – and a gift as well! It is truly a reminder that we must “reject godless ways and worldly desires”. It is an opportunity to redouble our efforts “to live temperately, justly, and devoutly” in our present, materialistic age – and await the “blessed hope” and the ultimate and final appearance of the God-Man whose birth we celebrate today!

So, let us pray, that we truly become people of hope! People who help bring light into the darkness of this world – People always “eager to do what is good” – because of God's Gift of Love who is born to us on this day!

Amen.

December 25, 2020

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