

Christmas Day Mass

Holy Rosary Cathedral

25 December 2018

Dear brother priests, deacons, parishioners, and especially dear visitors: all who have gathered in this our Cathedral to celebrate the good news of the Birth of our Saviour, who is Christ the Lord:

Introduction

Two thousand years ago, the Angels sang to the shepherds of this “good news of great joy for all the people” (Lk 2:10). Their song radiated the joy that fills our hearts tonight, for we hear in their singing the sounds of heaven. And in the manger we see a young Mother who has just given birth to her Child.

Jesus’ humble Birth was the moment that Israel had been awaiting for centuries, through many dark hours – the moment that all mankind was somehow waiting for. It longed for the time when the invisible God would step out of his concealment, when the world would be saved, and all things would be made new.¹

This is how St. Paul, in writing to Titus, expressed the Birth of Jesus: “When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us” (Tit 1:4). God has revealed himself. He has emerged from the inaccessible light in which he dwells. He himself has come into our midst. No longer is God merely an idea, and no longer do

¹ Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily at Midnight Mass (25 December 2007).

we have to form a picture of him on the basis of mere words.² God has now come into his own world, the world he himself created!³ “He no longer watches its course as a spectator; he himself is now within it. . . . Now he himself is on our very earth, where he is no better off than we and where he receives no special privilege, but our every fate: hunger, weariness, enmity, mortal terror and a wretched death.”⁴

It never ceases to astonish us that God became a child, so that we might love him and, like Mary, take him into our arms. In appearance, he was just another of the world’s countless children who are born in deprivation: poor among the poor.⁵ By being born in this way, “it is as if God were saying: I know that my glory frightens you . . . So now I am coming to you as a child, so that you can accept me and love me.”⁶

No Room in the Inn

But the mystery of Christmas, which is imbued with light and joy, can also unsettle us a little. The celebration carries with it a hint of sadness, inasmuch as the Gospel likewise tells of rejection. This

² Cf. Benedict, Homily at Midnight Mass (24 December 2011).

³ Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Light of the Word*, 27.

⁴ Karl Rahner, *The Great Church Year*, 49.

⁵ Cf. St. John Paul II, Homily at Midnight Mass (24 December 2003), 1.

⁶ Benedict XVI, Homily at Midnight Mass (24 December 2012).

happened to Joseph and Mary, who had to lay Jesus in a manger, “because there was no place for them in the inn” (Lk 2:7). This inn where they had planned to stay was in fact more like a bread and breakfast of the day, where the guests knew the owner. But the young couple’s booking was not honoured, and they were only given room in the animal shelter below the quarters Joseph would have reserved.⁷

For the Saviour of the world, for him through whom all things were created (cf. Col 1:16), there was no room in the little town of Bethlehem. This invites us to ponder a crucial question: Am I making room in my life for God and for others?

Making Room for God

Whether they know it or not, deep down people everywhere want God to draw near and give meaning to their lives. So often, however, when he makes his presence known, we have no room for him. We are so preoccupied with ourselves, we have such a need to take care of our own concerns, that we have no time for God.⁸

And so, let’s ask ourselves: Do I have room for God in my life when he seeks to touch my heart? Do I take time to listen to him? Or do I just shrug with indifference and a half-hearted “maybe later”?

⁷ Cf. David Lyle Jeffrey, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2012), 41.

⁸ Cf. Benedict XVI, Homily at Midnight Mass (25 December 2007).

Sadly, leaving room for God never seems to be very urgent. Our time is already completely filled with other things. And so he can't find room in us, since we have "occupied all the available space in our thoughts, our actions, our lives for ourselves."⁹ When "we are so 'full' of ourselves [that] there is no room left for God."¹⁰

Tonight we can reverse this neglect and forgetfulness of God. In the newborn Child Jesus he reaches out to us once again, asking for some room in our hearts where he can dwell.

Making Room for Others

The Christmas Gospel invites to reflect not only on the space we give to God but also to others in our life – to our brothers and sisters.

Because there was "no place for him in the inn" (cf. Lk 2:7), Jesus takes his place with those for whom there is no room in the world. His place is with those who don't belong to the rich and famous; with those who are rejected because they are regarded as weak; with those who are marginalized; with those, like the unborn, who are denied the status of persons; with those who are tortured and murdered for their faith. "It is in these that he hides himself."¹¹

⁹ Benedict XVI, Homily at Midnight Mass (25 December 2007).

¹⁰ Benedict XVI, Homily at Midnight Mass (24 December 2012).

¹¹ Thomas Merton.

And so, do I make room in my life for those whom Jesus does?
Should a disciple not follow the example of his teacher?

The Christ Child teaches us that making room for others is necessary for a fulfilling life as God wants. From now on, the way of authentic happiness and salvation is open to every man and woman who makes room in their heart for God and for others.

Conclusion

Dear brothers and sisters: long ago, in Bethlehem of Judea, the Saviour, the Son of God was born for us, but he found no room in the inn. Tonight he invites you once again to let him enter personally into your life, giving him room. He is waiting to become your companion along life's precarious path. Wherever you are on that journey, be it near or far, take the hand which he stretches out to you: it is a hand which seeks to take nothing away from you, but only to give you his love.¹² "To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Christ, the Lord" (Lk 2:11).

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¹² Cf. Benedict XVI, *Urbi et Orbi* Message (25 December 2005).