

12.24.2018 – Christmas – Vigil Mass at 6.45pm – Homily

Is 62:1-5 Acts 13:16-17, 22-25 Mt: 1:1-25 or 1:18-25

We all have gathered here to celebrate Christmas vigil. The whole world keep vigil tonight in anticipation, waiting in prayer and hope for the birth of Jesus Christ. We gather this holy night to pray that Christ be born again in our world, in our lives and families.

The readings for the Vigil Mass of Christmas give us a small glimpse into the dilemma in which St. Joseph almost certainly found himself. Doubtless we can reasonably assume that when Mary told Joseph that she was with child and that an angel came to her and informed her that she was going to be the mother of the Messiah and that this child was conceived by the Holy Spirit, Joseph didn't initially believe her. We can safely make this assumption based on what Scripture is telling us tonight that Joseph was prepared to divorce Mary "quietly," and such a breakup would have been in keeping with the laws of Moses observed by devout Jews. Even in feeling the most terrible betrayal that he must have felt, Joseph was determined not to put Mary's life at risk, because he knew that death was the penalty for someone who had committed adultery and been found out.

St. Joseph probably had an initial reaction that was something along the lines of "how could you do this to me Mary, I loved you and trusted you. The angel of the Lord had to come to Joseph in a dream and explain to him what was going on. Before he would come to understand that this was the most extraordinary birth of a child in all of history, but it wasn't going to appear extraordinary at first to anyone but a chosen few people who understood what was happening because God had somehow or other made it known to them. In our experience of doubts and confusion in the family Society and our relationship, we need an angel to remove all our doubts and keep us faithful to all who are under our care.

It was a silent night, yet God said in our first reading that he will not keep silent for Zion's sake, for our sake. It was at night, yet God said he will not rest until our vindication goes forth as brightness and our salvation as a burning touch. It was at night, yet God said all nations shall see our vindication and all kings shall see our glory. It was indeed a glorious night, a night the Israelites waited for, the night the whole world waited for and the night we celebrate today.

In the gospel reading, Matthew reminds us that God is a faithful God by tracing the genealogy of Jesus to David. Jesus is the stock that must rise from the Davidic line as promised by God. We celebrate His faithfulness tonight. He is a God who never fails, a covenant keeping God. Even in our unfaithfulness, he remains faithful. To his name, be praised now and forever.

For some of us, our nights have been noisy, dark and frustrating. There is nothing about our nights to be celebrated, but because of the silent and holy night we celebrate today, every darkness has been dispelled. This silent and holy night is a night that dispels the power of fear and brings the good news of our salvation.

On that silent and holy night, there were some shepherds outside keeping watch over their flock. That night, the One who had no place to be born is proclaimed to those who had no place at the table or in the streets of the city. The shepherds are the first to hear this Good News. Because of their work, they were men and women forced to live on the edges of society. Their state of life, and the places they had to stay, prevented them from observing all the ritual prescriptions of religious purification; as a result, they were considered unclean. Their skin, their clothing, their smell, their way of speaking, their origin, all betrayed them. Everything about them generated mistrust. They were men and women to be kept at a distance, to be feared. They were considered pagans among the believers, sinners among the just, foreigners among

the citizens. Yet to them – pagans, sinners and foreigners – the angel says, “Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of great joy for the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord” (Lk 2:10-11).

This is the joy that we tonight are called to share, to celebrate and to proclaim. The joy with which God, in his infinite mercy, has embraced us pagans, sinners and foreigners, and demands that we do the same.

That is the same message God has for you and me tonight; **“be not afraid”**, for to you a child is born, for to you a Son is given. This calls for great celebration, even the heavens celebrates it. A multitude of Angels came down from heaven that silent and holy night to praise God for what he has done for mankind. They sang Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased (Lk. 2:13-14).

The whole world stands still tonight because we commemorate the night the prince of peace entered our world in flesh and blood, we are to welcome him not just into our world but into our lives as Mary and Joseph did. Mary welcomed him into her life. She agreed to be the mother of the Lord. She said yes to the message of the Angel Gabriel; so also was Joseph. The Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and asked him to take Mary home as his wife, and he did as the Angel had told him. Tonight we celebrate their faith and the love of God.

We are challenged tonight to learn to listen to the voice of God in a world that has become very noisy, a world where the virtue of silence is no longer appreciated, a world where holiness is becoming an impossibility. The Angels of darkness are all over with all kinds of news; the media is full of both good and destructive information and the world tries to rub us of the great news of this night. It is the dawn of redeeming grace. It is the dawn of salvation. On to us a child is born, on to us a Son is given. Let the joy of this silent and holy night break the power of darkness over your life, let the joy of this night lead you into

the New Year with hope and continually celebrate the faithfulness of God forever.

- **Let us pray**

- Lord, I love you and adore you. I thank you for the immeasurable gift of your divine presence among us. I thank you, especially, for the invitation you offer me to join the poor shepherds as they come to adore you.
- May this Christmas celebration be one in which I understand, more deeply, the incredible love you have for all your children.
- Lord send an Angel to clear my doubts, fear, and thus become faithful and joyful.
- Give me grace to embrace sinners, pagan, downtrodden underprivileged.
- May I know that you came for me, to save me and to invite me to worship.
- May I, this day, enter into that worship and adoration with all the Heavenly Host.

Jesus, I trust in you.