

Christmas Eve Mass 2013

Several months ago there appeared a story that speaks so eloquently about the mystery we celebrate at Christmas. A child was born four months pre-maturely weighing hardly anything, struggling to survive. Yes, a five month old fetus...a human being with value and dignity. Due to medical technology, prayer and the love of family and care givers, this child of God will not only survive but thrive.

The human race was much like this tiny human life: vulnerable and helpless to create a life-giving world. God so loved us, his ultimate creation, that he did something unthinkable and shocking: he entered into our history by becoming one of us, not simply "appearing" in human form, but being conceived, and actually being born on a specific time at a specific place. And in this birth of silence and mystery, earth and heaven became united. Yes, God became a helpless and vulnerable infant who experienced rejection from the first moment he was conceived. The first people to give praise to him were the shepherds, who represented an undesirable group of outcasts, a sign of things to come.

In the Incarnation, Christ not only "took on" our humanity, he shared with all of humanity his very divinity. His Incarnation becomes the foundation of our new life, our ability to break free of the "incubator" that suffocates the human spirit, dividing us from each other. Peace on earth can only be established when we allow God to strengthen us...to heal us...to forgive us. We all know the darkness that envelops the world in the endless wars and violence, the poverty, prejudice, economic disparity, and the list goes on. The answer to all darkness is that divine life within the heart waiting to emerge or to be "born" through our own flesh and blood. Healing and reconciliation and peace can only be a reality when we give birth to Christ's Spirit and become His very Presence in the world today. As Paul says in the Second Reading from Titus: I was Christ who "...gave himself for us to deliver us from lawlessness and cleanse a people as his own."

We who "have walked in darkness have seen a great light," words from the prophet Isaiah. "For a child is born to us; upon his shoulder dominion rests," is this light that is the basis for our hope in a world that gathers people together to give praise and glory to God who makes it all possible.

God sees in us what the parents and doctors saw in that five month old fetus: hidden life and potential. "God so loved us," how often do we say those words or hear them; yes, this beautiful feast of mystery reminds us that God so loved us he became a helpless infant, wrapped in "swaddling clothes" placed in an animal feeding trough to become bread for the world. Hidden within each one of us is God's Presence and Love...waiting for us to transform the way we are living so that we give bread to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothes to the naked, compassion to the lonely. In doing these acts of mercy we give birth to Christ, plain and simple.