

FROM THE PASTOR
DECEMBER 26, 2021
CHRISTMAS/HOLY FAMILY SUNDAY

Christus Natus Este Nobis!
Venite Adoremus

Christ Is Born for Us
Come Let Us Adore Him!

The wondrous and grace-filled Solemnity of Our Lord's Holy Nativity is a Feast of contrasts, is it not?

We gather here in the darkness of night to celebrate the birth of that One who has brought to our world, the day that will know no night. We gather in the darkness to celebrate the birth of that One who has brought to our tired earth the Light which no darkness will ever extinguish. We gather, as the ancient hymn tells us, in the bleak mid-winter to celebrate the birth of that One who has brought to our earth the spring of new life in grace and mercy. And we gather in the cold to celebrate the birth of that One who has brought to our cold world the warmth of truth and the ardent charity of His Most Sacred Heart. Yes, this is a Feast of contrasts.

At Christmas there are no teachers. Rather we are all students once again, learning those lessons of firm faith, sure hope, and ardent charity which we must study again and again in our mortal lives. We are all children once again, from the pope in Rome, to the most self-effacing child in the back most pew of the Church. And what are the truths of our lesson today?

They are very simple indeed. The angels come to the shepherds by night who are tending their flocks. Because the shepherds are always child-like they are the most disposed to hear the wonder of the mystery that is proclaimed. They are told to go to the City of David to see the Christ of the Lord. They immediately heed the angels' request.

Although not formally educated the shepherds have an interior refinement and knowledge that is lacking in the most prestigious universities. They very well know the injunction of Moses not to come before the Lord empty-handed. And so, they gather their simple gifts at hand to bring to the Infant King: a wheel of cheese, an earthen wear jug of goat's milk, a hand-woven woolen blanket...But above all they gather their instruments to bring to the Holy Infant their gift of music and dance. And so, they depart in haste to see this wonder.

God always makes known the great mysteries of faith to children or to those who are childlike. Because of their profession, the shepherds were always children. Thus, they arrive at the foot of the manger, but through their childlike eyes they see that to which the proud and mighty are always blinded. Through their faith filled eyes they see the cave of Bethlehem, procured by the Guardian of the Redeemer St. Joseph, but through their faith filled eyes they see the cave of Joseph of Arimathea which will be the place of His burial. Through their faith filled eyes they can see the

Infant lying on the wood of the manger. But in faith, they see thirty-three years hence and see the same child, now a man, lying on the wood of the Cross. They behold the Infant vested in swaddling clothes, but through their faith filled eyes they can see the same Infant, now a man, wrapped in the clean linen shroud. And as they behold the Holy Virgin looking down upon the Holy Infant with love, they see thirty-three years hence the same sets of eyes reversed. The Infant, now a man, will look down from the height of the Cross upon His Most Holy Mother.

Yes, we are all students once again. May these lessons enable us to grasp the wondrous mystery that is silently given. May we be filled with the wonder and awe of St. John of the Cross, so normally given to Iberian severity. But on Christmas he would grasp the Infant from the manger in the monastery Church and dance with joy!

May we receive Our Lord this Christmas with the purity, humility, love and devotion with which His Most Holy Mother received Him on that first Christmas night, with the spirit and fervor of the Saints!

NEW COVID PROTOCOLS:

The Governor of New York State has included houses of worship in her recent directives. Therefore, since the Church does not require parishioners to present proof of vaccinations in order to worship God, we ask that all parishioners (two years of age and older) comply with the requirement to wear masks when participating in any activities on parish grounds. This state requirement is currently in effect through January 15, 2022. We will continue to adapt accordingly as new information becomes available. Your patience and Christian charity towards one another during this difficult time is appreciated.

Please remember that is **NOT** the responsibility of any individual to police/enforce State regulations.

Sincere best wishes for a Blessed and Merry Christmas and thank you most sincerely for all your goodness both to St. Paul's and to me.

*In Jesus and Mary,
Monsignor James F. Pereda*

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