**CHRISTMAS MASS, DECEMBER 24, AND DECEMBER 25, 2024.**

**The Birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-14)**

**“**In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world. (This was the first census that took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria.) And everyone went to their own town to register. So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger because there was no guest room available for them. And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.” Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

**Didn’t You Get My E-Mail**: As a little girl climbed onto Santa’s lap, Santa asked the usual, “And what would you like for Christmas?” The child stared at him open-mouthed and horrified for a minute, then gasped, “Didn’t you get my E-mail?”

***The greatest event in history had just happened***! The Messiah had been born. For ages, the Jews had waited for this moment, but when the announcement finally came, it came to humble shepherds who were out at night in the country fields. ***Jesus Christ, come to all, including the plain and the ordinary.*** He comes to anyone with a humble heart, humble enough to accept him. Whoever you are, whatever you do, you can have Jesus in your life. Don’t think you need extraordinary qualifications – Christ accepts you like you are.

**There were two extreme reactions to the birth of Christ**—one of great joy and the other of great hatred. These reactions can cause us to consider where we stand on this special day regarding Jesus who has come and is coming again. Do we rejoice with the angels, the shepherds, and the wise men, or do we stand with King Herod, who was filled with jealousy at the birth of a Messiah?

**Let Jesus grow up in our life: *Although our first picture of Jesus is as a baby in a manger, it must not be our last***. The CHRIST CHILD in the manger is the subject of a beautiful Christmas scene, but we must not leave him there. This tiny, helpless baby lived an amazing life, died for us, ascended into heaven, and will return to earth as King of Kings. Jesus Christ will come to rule and judge the world. Do you still picture Jesus as a baby in a manger, or is He your Lord and God? Make sure not to underestimate Jesus. Let Jesus Christ grow up in your life.

Jesus Christ is the Savior of the world, who died on the cross for our sins and arose from death. He told us: “***I am the Way the truth and the life no man comes to the Father but by me.”***Let us not be deceived by the culture of our day **that say, ‘**all religions are different and are not the same’. The true Christian gets excited that Jesus has come because he or she knows that Jesus Christ is my only hope and salvation. The manger (the environment) where Jesus was born was dark, dingy, and dirty. This was not the atmosphere the Jews expected as the birthplace of the Messiah-King. They thought their promised king would be born in royal surroundings. We should not limit God by our expectations. God is at work wherever he is needed in our world.

**Second reading (Hebrew 1: 1-6)**

**God’s Final Word is His Son – Jesus Christ.**

“In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs.”

***God has used many creative approaches over a long period of time*** to send his messages to his people. He spoke to Isaiah in visions, Jacob in a dream, and Abraham and Moses personally. However, Jesus fulfilled and finalized God’s revelation through the centuries. Jesus Christ is God. When we know Jesus, then we have all we need to be saved and to have a perfect relationship with God. You can have no clearer view of God than by looking at Jesus Christ. He is the complete expression of God in a human body.

**NCYC**: Our Youth Minister and some youths were in California last month for the National Conference of Young Catholics (NCYC). The conference brought together thousands of youths from around the country for three days of worship, great talks on the faith, music, breakout sessions, good food, and fun. According to some of the youth I was privileged to listen to, among the High Points of the event were the Eucharistic adoration and the Sacrament of Confession. At the Holy Communion, Jesus comes to us. The Eucharist remains God's real presence and power in our lives today. There, we have Christ within us. As we receive Jesus Christ in the Holy Communion today, may we do so with joy and allow Him to renew our personal lives.

My two favorite Christmas images are that of Santa surrounded by kids and Santa on his knees worshiping Jesus Christ. And that is what we should do every day—believe in Christ, worship Him, and follow Him daily. Amen.

**Song: Oh come all ye faithful**

O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant
O come ye, o come ye to Bethlehem
O come and behold Him, born the King of Angels

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord.

Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God, All glory in the highest
O come, let us adore Him. O come, let us adore Him
O come, let us adore Him. Christ the Lord!

**Letter from Santa to Baby Jesus: “**My dear precious Jesus, I did not mean to take your place, I only bring toys and things and you bring love and grace. People give me lists of wishes and hope that they came true; But you hear prayers of the heart and promise your will to do them. Children try to be good and not to cry when I am coming to town; But you love them just the way they are and that love will remain. I leave only a bag of toys and temporary joy for a season; But you leave a heart of love, full of purpose and reasons. I have a lot of believers and what one might call fame; But I never healed the blind or tried to help the lame. I have rosy cheeks and a voice full of laughter; But no nail marks - scarred hands or a promise of the hereafter. You may find several of me in town or at a mall; But there is only one omnipotent you, to answer a sinner’s call. ***And so, my dear precious Jesus, I kneel here to pray; To worship and adore you on this, your holy birthday”***. (author unknown)

**For our greatest need, God sent us a Savior**: If our greatest need had been information, God would have sent us an educator; If our greatest need had been technology, God would have sent us a scientist; If our greatest need had been money, God would have sent us a renowned economist; If our greatest need had been pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer; but our greatest need was forgiveness, so God sent us a Savior.

**PRAYER**

God With Us! In choosing to be born with us, God chose to be known by us. He, therefore, reveals himself in this way, so that this great sacrament of his love may not be an occasion for us to have great misunderstanding.

Today, the magi find, crying in a manger, the one they have followed as he shone in the sky. Today the magi see clearly, swaddling clothes, the one they have long awaited as he lay hidden among the stars.

Today the magi graze in deep wonder at what they see: heaven on earth, earth in heaven, humanity in God, God in humanity, one whom the whole universe cannot contain how enclosed in a tiny body. As they look, they believe and do not question, as their symbolic gifts bear witness: incense for God, gold for a king, myrrh got one who is to die...

Today Christ enters the Jordan to wash away the sin of the world. John himself testifies that this is why he has come: Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world...

Today Christ works the first of his signs from heaven by turning water into wine. But water mixed with wine has still to be changed into the sacrament of his blood, so that Christ may offer spiritual drink from the chalice of his body. Amen. (By St. Peter Chrysologus)

**MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

**FR MARTIN EZEIHUAKU, MSP.**