

Cycle C Christmas 2018
Tuesday December 25th, 2018

On behalf of Archbishop Schnurr, the faculty and staff of St. Antoninus Parish and School, we want to extend to you our well wishes for a very blessed and peaceful Christmas Season.

When we read from the Bible we find the following words from the prophet Isaiah, **“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone.”** Isaiah also said, **“For Zion’s sake I will not be silent, for Jerusalem’s sake I will not be quiet, until her vindication shines forth like the dawn and her victory like a burning torch.”** The prophet is telling us that a **great light** is shining. This **light** is a burning torch. Isaiah refuses to be silent he is not quiet. He is shouting with his outside voice telling of the coming of a savior. We know the savior of the world is Jesus Christ.

The Gospel readings of the Christmas Masses give us the reality of the birth of Jesus in time. The Gospel of Matthew describes Joseph’s dream when the angel of the Lord speaks to him and says: **“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name Him Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.”** And, **“...They shall name Him Emmanuel which means ‘God is with us.’”**

Matthew helps us to understand that Jesus is more than a baby in the womb of Mary. He is God!

Luke tells us about the birth of Jesus that happened in Bethlehem. **“While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn.”** Jesus was born into this world in the most deplorable of places. He was placed in a manger, which is a feedbox for animals. This is how God chose to come into the world. Luke’s Gospel also tells us about the shepherds. Shepherds were on the lowest run of society. These were the ones chosen to share the message of the angel. **“Do not be afraid for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the City of David a savior has been born for you who is Christ and Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.”** Then, no longer is just one angel appearing. **“Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests.’”** No doubt the angels would have been light in the darkness of night. The shepherds went in haste to see what had taken place. **“They found Mary and Joseph and the infant lying in the manger.”** The shepherds told everyone about the vision of the angels they experienced.

“Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” “Then the shepherds returned glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen.” No doubt that the shepherds were positively affected by what they saw. Truly the shepherds had been **enlightened** by Christ.

The Gospel of John refers to Jesus as **light**. John in writing to us speaks of John the Baptist. **“A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. John was not the light but came to testify to the light. The true light which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.”** The **true light** is Jesus Christ.

Going back a moment to Matthew’s Gospel we heard these words: **“They shall name Him Emmanuel which means ‘God is with us.’”** If Jesus is **“God is with us;”** and He is also the **True Light**, then we can conclude that God the Father is also **light**, which we will profess shortly in our creed **“Light from Light, True God from True God.”**

The annual celebration of Christmas; that is the Birth of Christ: is a two-fold opportunity for all of us. It is the opportunity for us to gather and give fitting praise and worship to God the Father through Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit; and to take a deeper journey in our life of faith. We hear much about **light** in the readings and the prayers of the Christmas Masses. Consider that we have also heard these or similar words and actions at baptisms.

In the Rite of Baptism for children the baptismal candle is lit from the Pascal Candle, usually by the father or godfather, and the priest says: **“Receive the light of Christ.”** He then continues: **“Parents and godparents this light is entrusted to you to be kept burning brightly. These children of yours have been enlightened by Christ. They are to walk always as children of the light. May they keep the flame of faith alive in their hearts. When the Lord comes, may they go out to meet Him with all the saints in the heavenly kingdom.”**

In baptism we have entered into the life of grace, and we have been **enlightened** by Christ. In baptism we are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In baptism we share in Jesus death and resurrection. Suddenly we have shifted from the wood of the manger to the wood of the cross. The Christmas event of Jesus birth is celebrated in light of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The sacrifice of this Mass takes us back to Calvary. The word Christmas means, Christ’s Mass. So, Christmas also reminds us of Christ’s sacrifice for each and every one of us. This reminder is meant to move us to greater worship of God and to take us on a deeper journey in our life faith. After all, Christmas, Easter, the Bible and the life of grace all point us to eternal life. In this life we have been **enlightened** by Christ in baptism. May we walk always as children of the **light!** **Merry Christmas!**