

Homily. Christmas Eve/Day. 24/25 December 2018.

Midnight Mass Readings.

Those of us who remember the late 90's, and I think from looking around me that many of us do, will recall the now famous words of President Reagan to the Leader of the old Soviet Union; Mr. Gorbachev, tear down that wall. Reagan was referring to the wall built by the USSR in the early 60's that divided East Germany and Berlin from the West and which had become by then a global symbol of division and oppression. Some months later, due to protests across Soviet bloc countries and within Germany itself, the hated wall fell, climbed over and torn down at last.

Walls always divide us and if they remain they inevitably lead to secrecy, suspicion, fear and oppression. I'm no fan of walls at all, be they legal or illegal, physical, emotional or those that cut off whole swathes of people from knowledge and the free expression of their ideas and creativity.

God's not a fan of walls either because they stop us from being who we really are and doing what we truly must. They stop us from being fully human and fully alive, from doing as God desires and will for us.

Christmas is the proof of this statement, because it proclaims to all who have eyes to see and ears to listen, that in the birth of Jesus Christ God has forever torn down the walls between us and God, us and each other.

Jesus is, as the 1st reading announced so joyfully, the Son given to us. He is both the Son of God and the Son of Mary, fully God and fully human, with us as one of us destroying walls and setting us free.

This is the Good News proclaimed and celebrated at Christmas. It's why we're gathered here now as God's people, the Church tonight/today.

In our society Christmas has become very commercialised, revolving around children and being together to share lavish meals, good times and memories. This isn't bad as long as we remember to keep the action of God for us at the heart of all that we give, receive and do over these special days. Being here as God's people to honour Christ is an excellent and good step in this direction. We've been give the best gift of them all by God which is God's own self as one of us, tearing down all the barriers between us. When Santa comes calling, when gift each other, when we share hospitality and meals, stories, love and happiness, the Christ-child needs to remain the reason behind it all.

In fact, it'd be good to remember the meaning of Christmas every day, tearing down the walls of fear, mistrust, anger, resentment, jealousy and the like that crop up between us. That would really be something honouring Jesus Himself and His birthday feast. To help us do this Jesus has stayed with us forever until the end of time itself. He's present within all who believe in Him. He's present here within our Parish community. He's living in the events of history and the story of our own lives. What's more, He keeps on giving Himself to us, in the living words of Scripture and in the Sacraments we're celebrating together.

Sisters and Brothers, make Jesus welcome within you in this gathering of our Church, and in the communion with Him and each other that we'll

soon be welcomed to receive. This is God's gift to us and to the world, a communion completely without walls or any separation from God's side. Let's resolve to keep this spirit happening over the coming year, making Christ alive in us a reality, and Christmas out of every day we're together.