

Homily. Christmas 2019.

I think that we're all pretty tired of spin. We're sick to death of lies, of half-truths and of those people who are only in it for themselves and what they can get out of us. Behaviours like these, as Isaiah said, only to keep us in slavery, like a people sleep-walking through our days in a land of deep shadow, living out our lives in perpetual darkness.

The Nativity of our Lord which we're celebrating here begins the ending of this way falsehood, of hypocrisy and speaking with a forked tongue. For, upon us a great light has now shone bringing us hope, gladness and rejoicing. What's more, this light now shining out in our world cannot be overcome by any darkness; It's a 'forever' brightness for all of our days.

Some ask why Jesus wasn't born to people of power, position and wealth rather than to the humble ordinary couple that he was? The answer to this is that only people who choose to work with God can be open to the light God offers. People who are rich, powerful and hold great positions of influence are way too busy, too full of themselves, of their own ideas and plans, to leave much room for what God wants to do. Mary and Joseph were simple, an 'every man and woman' going about their daily lives when God asked them to come and work with Him. They had the space inside of them to hear God's invitation and the freedom to say their yes, even if it meant that their plans had to change, which they did. We all know that the powerful and self-important have no such space or inner freedom, except for what they want to get out of us and this world for themselves.

Those shepherds in the fields that first Christmas night were ordinary folk, too, scratching out a living, day after day. When the Angels spoke their news of great joy they listened, becoming the very first to see the Light of the World wrapped up in swaddling clothes and lying in the manger, the feed box for the animals. Likewise, the Wise Men having seen in the starlight what was going to happen accepted change. They left all behind, travelling long desert wastes so as to pay homage to the new born King.

None of the rich, powerful or politically connected came because they hadn't the openness of heart and mind to see the light, nor the time to listen to God's call of Good-News and liberation for all of the people. Liberation of the people is the last thing that they ever want for us. Remember, when King Herod finally worked out that something was afoot at Bethlehem he came bearing only a reign of blood and terror, killing all who might threaten his power. This forced the Holy Family to flee as refugees to far off Egypt. Thankfully, Mary and Joseph were always open to adapting to the many changes God asked of them, for the good of their Son and for the saving of God's trusting people.

Over 2000 years later this is what we're celebrating; a gift from God to us made possible by the choices of those who were faithful and humble, the little people who faced the facts, going along with what had to change so that good might be born for the benefit of many. They didn't lust after the security, deception and vanity so prized by those who seek only to deceive and oppress us for their own advantage, as much today as ever such people have done.

All of which poses an important Christmas question for us; Do we choose the open and honest way, the faith-filled, kind and loving way of service for the common good, or the way of power that's based on lies and selfishness? We know very well that the first way leads to light and liberty, the other to selfishness, deception and greater darkness. I hope that this Christmas the witness of Mary and Joseph, the shepherds out minding their flocks and the wise men who travelled from their faraway lands guides us into making the sort of choices that change us and our society for the better. This is how we can give our true homage to Jesus our King, for our only other option is to keep making choices that take everyone even deeper into slavery and fear and a darkness with any hope or end.