

FROM THE PASTOR

Dear Brothers and Sisters



I want to personally welcome everyone who attends Mass here this Christmas. The world is changed by the presence of a child born in Bethlehem. The world is changed not because it magically becomes a better place, but because there is a presence of love which is able to transform, from within, all who receive it.

The child born is Son of God and son of Mary. As Son of God, he shows us that God is with us. As son of Mary, he shows that God is one with us. He has come to our world, the world which he created, and entered into it in a way that only he could, becoming one with those he loved.

Our vocation, our mission in life, is to love. The Christ child makes love present in the world, a love which was lost since the Fall in the Garden of Eden. The love of God is communicated to humanity in a language we can understand. This love vanquishes sin and darkness, hopelessness, and despair, it heals the broken hearted and raises up those who are bowed down.

No matter what strife or anguish, difficulties, or problems you are facing, Christmas offers each one of us the possibility to encounter the love of God; it enables us to love others as Christ has loved us.

We are able to love him precisely because he has loved us in this way. It's difficult to love someone who is strong, someone who we perceive as above us, greater than us, somebody we fear. It's much easier to love someone who is weak, defenseless, in need. Love descends to that person, that place, without effort, spontaneously.

The love which God has for us is a defenseless love. It is a love which will accept to be born in a cold stable. It is a love which will be placed in a wooden manger. It is a love which will, in the end, be beaten, stripped, humiliated. It is a love which will descend to the poorest and lowest experience of humanity. It is a love which, ultimately will allow itself to suffer in place of that humanity, to be crucified and buried in the ground. A love which will rise from the dead, from the ashes, from all hopelessness, and ascend to heaven, offering each one of us the possibility to experience the power which this love has to transform the world we live in.

This love redeems us from all that is not love, this love is able to penetrate the darkest night; but this love is no mere sweet sentimentality on God's part.

To receive it we ourselves are invited to become childlike, to become small. Brother Simeon, a Cistercian monk of St. Joseph's Abbey, puts it this way: "...a paradox is involved here: the greatness of God can be perceived only by babes, or infants, those who have no words of their own....there is a clear affinity between God and children. This truth is at the center of the mystery of Christmas, when God is revealed in the form of a baby. If he loves the childlike, it is because they are empty enough to receive what he wants to give them."

We have come here to celebrate "Christmas," a word derived from "Christ's Mass." The Mass, our Eucharist, is our act of Thanksgiving in response to the love of God, for us and for all humanity.

This celebration belongs to all of us, and not just today, but every Sunday. You will find a welcoming parish community here, and a place to nourish your faith on a weekly basis. May each of us become child-like enough this Christmas to receive what Christ gives us. May his birth provoke a groundswell of reaction on our part, as we gather around him lying in the manger, may our lives and our world be transformed by this child born for us.

Fr. Sean