

Christmas 2024

December 24-25, 2024

Luke 2: 1-14

The arrival of a child into a family is an occasion of great joy. The family calls relatives and throws parties. Sometimes bubble gum or even real cigars are passed around. The new mother sits in a warm glow of peace and warmth. But as much as the child is welcomed and loved, there *comes with the child a bit of stark reality* that can't be *overlooked*. This child, **especially if it is the first**, is going to *cause a lot of changes in the life-style of these parents*. The new parents cannot step out as easily as they did before. At night, their sleep may be interrupted in order to feed the baby. *For many years, they will be doing things that are difficult; staying up with the sick child; being patient when they are exceptionally tired; keeping a watchful eye* on almost every aspect of the child's life.

The *birth of Jesus was cause for great joy* – to His parents, to shepherds and kings, to the whole world, to us. A Savior who came in the *vulnerability of a child* shows how **deeply** God loves. But, just like any child born into a family, this *Jesus reborn in our hearts* comes to **call us to change**. One cannot receive this caring God into one's living and continue in selfish, *unholy* ways.

We must make changes... significant changes.

Scripture points out the twofold effect of the birth of this child. Isaiah proclaims to a people in **darkness**, living without hope, that a **light** has shown in their midst. A

small child had been born; *Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Prince of Peace*. **Their lives would be changed**. Their burdens will be removed and peace will come to the land. *Surely He will be a cause of rejoicing*. This child will grow to **demand justice**. As an ideal king He will promote God's Will. Consequently, He will call those who are not doing God's will to make **changes** in their lives.

Jesus' *first coming* as a human was to *bring salvation*. He **gave himself completely** to us. This coming was an occasion of HOPE. At the same time, *Jesus called us to become a people eager to do what is right*. Again, the **birth** of Jesus **demands** some **change** in our lives so as to be prepared for His **second coming as judge**.

Some of the Gospels show us the **change** that takes place in the life of Joseph and Mary. These *two simple people*, poor, resting in a stable, wrapping the newborn infant in clothing, *are full of joy* at the birth of the child. But, with this birth, *all kinds of unexpected things begin to happen*. Shepherds appear telling of angels in the night skies. Later, strangers from the East will come bearing precious, expensive gifts. Joseph will dream dreams. They will journey to Egypt. **Their lives will change**.

We gather on this Christmas (Eve) Day to remember that Jesus was born into our world, a human like us. **He came to show God's enormous love**. He came to be with us in the experiencing of our joys and pains. **But His coming is also a call**. The ***call is to conversion***, to **change ways we act toward each other** and choices we make that can

harm. He has shown the way. In the midst of rejection that He experienced from birth to death, He **showed forgiveness to all**. He shows it to each one of us. ***He is the gift***. Our response is to love the gift, to be a gift to each other, to be a **light** to our world that sits in **darkness**.

Once more the world will hear the proclamation “*Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to all.*” But **this time** it will **not** come from angels’ voices in a night sky, but **from the lives we live**. Indeed, He is *born anew in each of our hearts as we receive Him in Eucharist*. He calls us to **give** the greatest gift of all ...

the gift of selfless love.