

The Nativity of the Lord, Cycle C

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The Church of Jesus the Good Shepherd

December 25, 2009, Mass at Midnight and 10:00 a.m.

O Come, O Come Emmanuel. These are the words we have cried out at the beginning of each Mass as we journeyed through the four weeks of Advent. They are the words that all people down through the ages have shouted forth. They are the words of the Prophets and the Patriarchs. They are the words of ancient peoples. They are the words that Abraham called out to God. They are the words that Israel made his cry as he labored in bondage in Egypt. They are the words that daughter Zion uttered in lamentation. They are the words that rang out from the Temple in Jerusalem. They were the words of exiles and widows and orphans. They are the words of the deaf, the blind, the dumb, the lame and dying. They are the words that all men and women of righteousness, that all people of hope have given voice to over the centuries. They have been found on the lips of sinners and saints, of martyrs and virgins, of husbands and wives, of priests and

nuns, of the young and the old, of kings and queens, of the poor and forgotten. They are the ancient cry of a people waiting patiently for the Lord. They are our words, they are the words of all men and women of good will. They are the words of all people who have believed in the promises of God.

God has heeded those words. He has heard the cry of His people and He has responded. He heard these words down through the centuries, He heard these words and because He loved us so much, because He wanted us to be aware of how great that love was he answered the prayer of His people once and for all. He answered that prayer in the most amazing way. The answer to that prayer is what we celebrate this night. In the darkness of this night we receive the answer to the prayer of all peoples. In the darkness of this night we celebrate one of the greatest acts of love the world has ever known. In the darkness of this night we celebrate the moment that would forever change the world. In the darkness of this night we celebrate the Incarnation of the Lord,

the Word of God in flesh appearing. It was on a night much like this that Our Blessed Lord was born in a dirty stable surrounded by His creation. And it was on a night like this the cry of all people would forever be changed. Because the Word now dwelt amongst us our words would necessarily change.

Already in this Mass our words have changed we no longer cry out to God that He will come. Instead since we have received so great a gift; since God heard the cry of His people our cry has changed. No longer are we a people who call out to God to come instead we are a people who cry out to the nations to come and witness the great gift we have received. We are a people who cry out to all of creation to come and adore He who made all things at the beginning of time and He who made all things new once more. The first cry of a people who have received so great a gift is for the Faithful to come; the faithful men and women down through the ages who have waited expectantly for the Lord. We call to them to come and worship at the manger to come and

adore the God of all creation. To come and acknowledge that the prayer of all the ages has been heard and answered in a far greater way than we could have ever imagined or dreamed. We call to them to come not as beggars or slaves but as free persons joyful and triumphant because our Good God has heard our cry and answered it. This is a night of triumph and joy because it is the night that saw the beginning of the work of our salvation and redemption.

Our cry should then acknowledge the greatness of the gift we have received. It acknowledges that not only in the darkness of the night did the true light come into the world but that in a world darkened by sin the only light that could banish the darkness has come. The God of God and the Light of Light has come into the world and for this reason and no other we should cry out with joy and exultation. We should cry out to all people so that they will know that sin's reign has ended and only light and peace shall reign. In recognition of so great a gift we then call upon the Cherubim and Seraphim, the Angels and Archangels, and all of

the Heavenly Hosts to join us in our hymn of exultation and glory. We call to them to help us let God know how grateful we are for so great a gift.

For this reason we have gathered here in the darkness of this night to welcome our Lord to give glory and praise to God for granting us so great a gift. For this reason we are filled with joy and hope because we are reminded once more of the great love God has for us. We show this joy through our own exchange of gifts with those we love and hold dear. Think for a moment if you will of your own generous spirit. Think for a moment of the joy you feel when you give to someone you love a gift. Then recognize how much God loves you. His love is so great that he gave you his only begotten son. Think of the joy that emanated from heaven that night so many years ago as God gave to the world and all of creation His great gift. That is why choirs of angels heralded his birth. That is why shepherds came from a field nearby because they had received good news of great joy. Because on this day in the City of

David a savior has been born who is Christ the Lord. We to have received good news of great joy this day because we celebrate the nativity of the Lord but we unlike the shepherds of so long ago know the full extent of God's love. We know to what lengths this infant whose birth we celebrate would go to save us in the fullness of time.

Therefore, let us adore him not only as the infant in the manger but as the Lamb of God sacrificed for us upon the cross at Calvary. Let us adore Him for freeing us from the double bondage of sin and death.

Let us adore Him for being willing to give up His life for our sakes. Let us adore him for the great gift of His Church. Let us adore Him for adopting us into the family of God. Let us adore him for giving us his Body and Blood to be true food and true drink in the Eucharist. But let us adore him most of all for having loved us, for being willing to enter the world as a tiny babe wrapped in swaddling clothes. On this day of all days we should be filled with joy and hope as we are reminded of

the full depth of God's love. It is therefore with great joy my brothers and sisters that I wish you Merry Christmas.