

CHRISTMAS EVE 2018
SERMON – SAINT JOSEPH PARISH

FATHER CRAIG LOONEY

TITUS 2.11 ST. LUKE 2.1 ST. JOHN 1.1

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BEFORE THE WORLD WAS CREATED...THE WORD ALREADY EXISTED...HE WAS WITH GOD...AND HE WAS THE SAME AS GOD. THE WORD WAS THE SOURCE OF LIFE...AND THIS LIFE BROUGHT LIGHT TO MANKIND...THE LIGHT SHINES IN DARKNESS...THE DARKNESS CAN NEVER PUT IT OUT. AND THE WORD BECAME A HUMAN BEING...A BABY BOY...AND FULL OF GRACE AND TRUTH LIVED AMONG US. WE SAW HIS GLORY...THE GLORY WHICH HE RECEIVED...AS GOD'S ONLY SON.

The birth of Jesus is the story of the *INCARNATION*...God became a human being like us...born in a stable...with animals for his companions...the humblest of births. He is our *EMMANUEL*...*GOD WITH US*. He is the Light of John's Gospel...who leads the world out of darkness and sin and death into light and life and hope. Jesus learned to walk among us so one day we might walk with him in heaven...forever.

Throughout Advent we heard the prophecies from Isaiah and Malachi telling us the Savior was coming who would set things right between God and humankind. We heard John the Baptist's message...to get our hearts and minds and souls ready because our King is coming. Christmas is here...King Jesus has arrived!

When we think of royalty we think of royal babies being born in great palaces wrapped in fine clothes and surrounded by servants to take care of their every need. Not so with King Jesus...his birth in a stable wrapped with strips of linen foretells the mission he will fulfill as a grown-up Jesus...who came to us to serve.

In the secularized and commercialized Christmas of shopping malls and Internet stores...we can expect Christmas trees and decorations to disappear within a few days. After-Christmas sales will give way to the next big Hallmark event...Valentine's Day.

Tonight we celebrate the birth of Jesus with hymns of joy and praise. Our Christmas has just begun...and we have twelve days to celebrate the birth of Jesus...so let's not take

the Christmas tree and decorations down just yet.

The Christmas story needs to be told over and over again...to a world increasingly out of order and disordered...and in need of hearing about God's love and the peace and hope the birth of Jesus brings to us.

We hear the Christmas story told at the conclusion of every Sunday Mass and we will hear it tonight...the first fourteen verses of John's Gospel...the *Prologue*...meaning *Beginning Words*. The Christmas story brings us Good News and cause to celebrate...today and all year.

The Christmas story is not just about tonight...and it is a story we must not keep to ourselves...we must tell others. We must share the story of God's love for mankind...a love so deep we cannot fully understand its depth now...but a love that empowers and sustains us every day.

At the beginning of tonight's Liturgy we blessed our beautiful Crèche, decorated with the figures of the Blessed Mother, our patron Saint Joseph, the shepherds and animals and the Baby Jesus. The Crèche, as we have learned, is in itself highly instructive. Set every year on Christmas Eve, it remains in place beyond the Twelve Days of Christmas...throughout the Season of Epiphany.

Before we leave here tonight, let's spend a few minutes at the Crèche in quiet prayer and meditation on the real meaning of Christmas. God has given us the best Christmas gift possible...himself...in the Baby Jesus...our King and Savior.

Tonight we join with the Angels and Saints of Luke's Gospel and shout *GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST HEAVEN, AND PEACE ON EARTH TO THOSE WITH WHOM HE IS PLEASED!*

King Jesus is here...O come, Let us adore him!

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