

Christmas Eve/Day 2021

Sermon – Saint Joseph Parish

Father Craig Looney

*Titus 2.11-15 St. Luke 2.1-14*

*Hebrews 1.1-12 St. John 1.1-14*

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What sort of town was the Bethlehem of 2021 years ago? It was a non-descript suburb with a population around 200 about 5 miles outside the City of Jerusalem...you could walk the distance in an hour or two...and most people did.

What sort of day was it when Jesus was born? A day like any other day, people going about their business, unaware of the event that would alter history and illuminate our times. All things are much as they were then...except we were there.

For the Christmas Miracle to be anything other than a nice story we hear read at Mass once a year...we have to experience it as if we were indeed were there 2021 years ago. We must place ourselves directly inside the scene depicted in our beautiful Crèche. What do we see?

The Blessed Mother, the arch-type for all mothers, has washed the newborn Jesus and rubbed oil all over his body. She has wrapped him in clean cloth to keep him warm. Standing quietly behind her in a profound act of humility is Joseph...the Patron Saint of this parish...the pattern for all fathers to emulate. And we were there!

In the distance something magical happens. An angel brings the Good News about Jesus' birth to shepherds taking care of their sheep. A great choir of angels appears and sings "*Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to those with whom he is pleased.*" And we were there!

We take our place with the shepherds and the sheep...this is not a palace...it is a barn used to keep and feed animals. We are reminded of what we heard as

we lighted the Fourth Candle on the Advent Wreath...God didn't make his presence known to us in blazing flashes...but as a fragile flame...a baby. Strange since Bethlehem was where King David was born 1000 years earlier. It is a Royal City...but our King Jesus reigns in humility. And we were there!

The Christmas Story is not like any other story. It is the story of the *Incarnation*...God became flesh and blood and walked among us so one day we might walk with him in heaven. It is the story of *Emmanuel*...*God with us*. It is the Good News of Saint John's Gospel we read at the end of every Sunday Mass; and it is the Gospel appointed for the Christmas Day Mass. It is the story of Jesus who leads the world out of darkness and death into light and life...and the darkness can never overcome him! And we were there!

It's been a short imaginary journey; now let's transport ourselves back to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to this place at this time. We bring back with us the Christmas story that is timeless in bringing hope and peace to a fractured world...not a worldly hope and peace but hope and peace that remain alive within us and emanate from our hearts...because we were there.

The shepherds didn't keep the Good News about Jesus' birth to themselves. They went out and told others. We can't keep the Christmas story to ourselves either. It is the story about God saving and redeeming us for himself...because his love for us is beyond anything we can possibly imagine. We continue to experience God's love for us now.

Jesus our God and King and Savior is here...and so are we...O come, let us adore him!

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