

Christmas is more than just nice things

Christmas Eve 2017

(Invite the Children to come up for the first ½ of the homily)

Get them to help me bless the Nativity scene.

Get them to sit down in front of the steps

To children

What do you suppose God looks like?

If you had to describe God to someone who has never heard about him,
how would you describe him?

Huge, bigger than anything we can imagine.

Powerful, so powerful the earth would shake if he walked on it.

Majestic, so majestic we could hardly look at him without our eyes hurting.

Now what is tonight all about? Jesus is born.

Jesus is God, but the earth didn't shake when he rolled over in his manger.

He is only a tiny helpless baby,

so weak his mom has to hold his head up because he can't do that himself.

So why do you suppose an all powerful almighty, all knowing God
would chose to be born as a small helpless child?

Isaiah tells us that "The yoke of our burden, the bar across our shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor, you have broken.

Do you know what a yoke is? Not the yellow part of an egg.

A yoke is a big heavy wooden bar that hooks to oxen together.

A plough is connected the yoke,

and the oxen are forced to pull that big heavy plough all day long, in the field.

Do you think they liked that?

Do you think you would like it if someone hooked you up to a plough
and made you plough a whole field?

Jesus was born as a small child to show us that there is another way.

He was born as a small child to show us that love is stronger than any kind of meanness.

He was born to show us another way to live.

Do you remember where Jesus was laid after he was born.

He was wrapped in swaddling clothes and wrapped in a manger.

Do you know what a manger is?

A manger is a big wooden trough that you put hay in so that that the animals can eat it.

Why do you suppose Jesus was put into the manger?

It was just the right size for a small baby.

But I think it was to give us a glimpse into his future.

What is the most important food we can ever eat.

The Eucharist, the bread and wine we consecrate every Sunday.

It is what sustains us as we journey to our heavenly homeland.

Without it we would slowly die.

The Christmas story tells us that from the very moment Jesus was born,

he wanted to be the food we need to get through life.

Now here is a question I want you to think about.

Do you think God wants us to celebrate Christmas only one day of the year?

Do you think he wants us to think of him a tiny child only one day of the year?

Do you think he wants us to give presents to each other one day of the year?

Do you think that he wants us to be nice to each other only one day of the year?

No I think he wants us to celebrate Christmas each and every day.

Every day he wants us to share the love he came to bring.

Sometimes when we get bigger we forget to share the love that Jesus came to bring
with all those around us.

I want to give you something tonight.

I want to give you a tiny candle, and I want you to turn it on,

and I want this candle to remind you

that we are called to share the light of Christ with all people.

Can you take this candle back to your mom and dad

and remind them that we are supposed to share God's love with all those around us...
every day of the year.

To the adults

Christmas has arrived. The light has shattered the darkness.

Despair and oppression are dispelled.

Joy is let loose on the earth—it is time to share in the goodness of God.

The small child born on this night opens a small crack--that will expand into a sanctuary,

a place of grace and security, built on the justice and righteousness for all peoples.

One day this child's dominion will have no end.

Now this is a good thought. But let's face reality.

Where is the era of peace and justice that the birth of this child is supposed to inaugurate?

One need only pick up any newspaper to see that there is no peace in the world.

The yoke still weighs heavily on many people;

the rod of their oppressors has not been broken.

The tramping of soldiers boots and the din of war have not ceased.

So we are forced to ask, "If Jesus came to usher in a kingdom of peace...where is that peace?"

Now I have to be perfectly clear, God is not the originator of violence and unrest in our world."

He does not desire wars and disunity in our world.

God does not desire violence (pause) but at the same time he will not impose his peace by force.

If God took away all the wars in our world, he would also be taking away our freedom of choice;
which besides life is the greatest gift he gave to us.

Unfortunately there are people who chose to be violent;

there are people who are so greedy that their actions lead to war.

We must always keep in mind violence is not an action of God;

It is an action of a human being.

The second reading speaks of impiety.

Impiety is more than just desires of the world.

If piety is an attitude that brings one in line with the gospel,

impiety is an attitude that brings one into an attitude opposite the gospel.

Impiety is in essence--is a negation of Christ—

to consciously choose to go against the will of God.

This is why God has appeared on this night,

because the only way to come down a rid the earth of all sin,

was to come down and show us the tremendous love that he has for all humanity...

to show us a better way...to show us the way he intended us to live.

Simply, peacefully, in union with one another--and in union with God...

and if everyone did this there would be world peace.

This is not just a pipe dream; this is what this night is all about.

When Jesus was eight days old, his parents presented him in the temple.

There the prophet Simeon proclaimed,

“Now master, you can let your servant go in peace, according to your word,

for my eyes have seen your salvation.”

Tonight we can say the same thing.

“Now master, you can let your servant go in peace,

for my eyes have seen your salvation.”

The longing for tomorrow is over.

At the very dawn of creation God sang the universe into existence.

Tonight we listen for the echo of the song of creation.

At that time God, the creator, sighed and breathed over the empty dark at the dawn of time.

Tonight the words of this song become more distinct,

and we hear them as:

Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!”