

Christmas 06

Christmas is magic, is it not? The lights, the gifts, the family gatherings—all these things taken together make it a time which approaches the ideal, a time of peace and love. May that be so for all of us this year! Let that be our Christmas wish for and gift to each other!

The readings for this Mass are very comforting. The first reading from Isaiah describes a time of light and peace. “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” “For every boot that trampled in battle, every cloak rolled in blood, will be burned as fuel for flames.” The second reading from Titus tells us straight out that because the grace of God has appeared among us in Jesus, we have to reject godless ways and worldly desires and live instead temperately (modestly), justly and devoutly. We must be eager to do what is good.

The gospel is the scene of the child’s birth. It too can be a very soothing reading, but there are a few points to the story which bring in harsher notes. Because of a governmental regulation, the parents are forced to travel when Mary is in her last days before giving birth. They find no room in the inn. Therefore the baby

comes into the world in a stable and is placed in an animal's trough. And the people who first see the child are shepherds, and shepherds in those days were disreputable people who often stole each other's sheep. So, not all was ideal. But the point of these inconveniences is to tell us that when God comes among us as a human being, he turns things upside down. He does not associate himself with the powerful and rich. Rather he identifies himself with the powerless, the poor.

As we go into the night at the end of Mass, let us take the light of the Christ child with us. Let us promise him that we will try to live modestly, justly and devoutly. Let us tell him that we will try to realize that we are given life so that we may do that which is good. If we can promise him that, then our position at his crib and his cross is secure.