

## Christmas 2015

At last we are celebrating Christmas in a church. The shopping malls have had their season of sales and the TV shows have given us their programs. On the surface there's a sort of noisy joy the world offers us at Christmas, a joy that we experience at parties and gatherings of families and friends. And all that is great.

There is, however, a deeper joy that God offers us at Christmas, a deep down joy that comes with knowing that we are loved in a special way by God. Charles Dickens leads us toward that that special joy in his wonderful novel *A Christmas Carol*.

Now we are with Joseph and Mary in a church where once again in a few moments God the Son will come to us... this time in Holy Communion. Born of a little Jewish girl, with a carpenter for His stepfather, the newborn Christ was given a feeding trough for a crib. Shepherds and farm animals witnessed His coming. What was small, humble, and ordinary became astonishingly extra-ordinary.

Hidden and away in Bethlehem, almost in secret, in the quiet of night, the very nature of our humanity and our world was changed forever.

Today, hidden deep in our hearts and souls, He comes to us once again.

Our Gospel reading that we have just heard proclaimed may not have the shepherds, and angels and crowded inns that we here at other Christmas celebrations, but John's proclamation is no less important to the Christmas story and to our lives as daughters and sons of God.

St. John begins his Gospel speaking of God's Word that became flesh, human flesh, the same flesh that is yours and mine. St. John tells us that all things came to be through Him. That means that each one of us came into being by God's own Word.

John goes on to speak of human rejection of God's Word, but also that humans have accepted God's Word made flesh. Now it is so important that we understand what he says next.

"But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice, nor by a man's decision but of God."

Think for a moment about the importance of that last statement. We came into life by God's love, by God's decision. What a truly incredible thought that is! What a wonder it is, then, that God gave us the life of His Son. What a wonder it is that God our Father will, in the bread and wine we are about to place on this altar, give us once again the life of His Son.

Just thinking about that should fill our hearts with Christmas joy!

For Christians, every Sunday is Easter. But every Mass should be for us another Christmas. Because every Mass is an opportunity for us to be the shepherds who heard the angels proclaiming Glory to God.

Each one of us can follow in their footsteps and so find Mary and her Son and receive the One she is offering us, her Son conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit, the One who is both Son of God and Son of Man.

And so at last we are celebrating Christmas in a church. The shopping malls have had their season of sales and the TV shows have given us their programs. Now we are with Joseph and Mary in a church where once again in a few moments God the Son will come to us... this time in Holy Communion.

We must never say or think for one moment that we have nothing to give Him in return. We must never say or think that we are of no value, or that our lives are a waste. God has gone to great lengths, infinite lengths, to come to us looking for our love.

We can give God no greater gift this Christmas than to give Him our love and our lives in return.