

## Christmas 1C06

Christmas has come and gone for another year—at least for most of the people in our culture. For us at St. Peter's, Christmas continues through until next Sunday when we will celebrate the Feast of the Epiphany—the proclamation of Jesus' birth to the world symbolized by the coming of the Magi (the 3 wise men) to the stable. But for most of our friends and their families, the excitement of Christmas has passed. And we are left remembering, reflecting, and perhaps feeling a little more financially strapped than we were a few weeks ago.\_\_\_\_

For some people, though, there is, unfortunately, a cynicism to the passing of Christmas. You know, the . . . “Oh, thank goodness THAT is over with” attitude. While for others there is a lingering sense of joy and of more pleasant memories that will brighten the days of the new year ahead.\_\_\_\_

But what about us? How do you and I leave this experience of Christmas?

\_\_\_\_Throughout Advent and into Christmas Eve and Day we heard the perspective of the first participants of Christmas and how it approached and left them. \_\_\_\_

Zechariah and Elizabeth came to the event of the first Christmas and undoubtedly left it with feelings of surprise, wonder, and amazement that they were so blessed to have shared in the preparation for the coming of the Messiah.\_\_\_\_

John the Baptist was the one appointed to make preparations for the coming of the Messiah, and we knew from our Advent readings that that was just what he did in his adult years. It's difficult not to believe that at some point as John looked back over the way he had come into the world and evaluated his role in the coming of the Messiah that there was, for him, a sense of having accomplished his task well.

\_\_\_Mary and Joseph left that first Christmas with responsibility. They fulfilled the responsibilities required of them. They cared for the safety and upbringing of the holy Child of God. \_\_\_

The shepherds left the first Christmas scene and returned to their common daily tasks. But they did so as new people. Because they returned to the ordinariness of life glorifying and praising God. \_\_\_

The Three Kings, who we will hear more about next week, after they had presented their gifts and worshiped the new born King, left to return to their homeland directed and guided by God. \_\_\_

And those holy watchers and waiters for the coming of the Messiah, Simeon and Anna, they left the first Christmas with a sense of fulfillment, completeness, and satisfaction—having had their prayers answered as they were granted the honor of beholding the Messiah of God before they died.

All these people left the first Christmas giving thanks to God and sharing the news with all they met as they went on their way.\_\_\_\_

Now we are again this year leaving the celebration of this miraculous event. And we must ask ourselves the question, just how do we go on? What is our attitude toward the world and our lives after having had this event brought near to us again? What do we say to other people about it? Do we take with us any of the feelings, any of the attitudes of wonder that those first participants took with them?\_\_\_\_

For just a moment, try to imagine some of those cynical statements I referred to earlier coming from the lips of those first participants. Can't you just hear Zechariah or Elizabeth, or the Shepherds, or the Wise Men saying to one another things like... \_\_\_\_ "It was great, but thank goodness it's over."\_\_ Or\_\_\_\_ "We really gave and received a lot of nice gifts, but we spent way too much money. We went way over our budget. Or "It was a beautiful worship experience. I was really touched. But now, it's time to get back to work. I've really got to get things shaped up. It's the beginning of a new year already." Or\_\_\_\_ "I'm just worn out. Man, am I tired!" \_\_\_\_

You've heard them all, haven't you? But they really seem out of place and out of character if you imagine these things being said by the people who actually shared in the event of the first Christmas.

Or for that matter, those who have truly shared in and been touched by any Christmas.\_\_\_\_ Could it be that there is another attitude that we should have as we leave the celebration of Christmas and pack away the Christmas trimmings for another year? \_\_\_\_I, of course, believe there is. And that different attitude can be ours if we simply hear and receive the truth of Christmas this year.\_\_\_\_

The announcement of the birth of Jesus is beautifully proclaimed in a more mystical and yet more powerful way by the author of our reading from the Gospels today—St. John. "... "And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth..."

That is the message of Christmas now. The Word of God has come and now dwells among us. To you. To me. To us. Regardless of who we are. Regardless of what has occurred in our lives. In spite of what we have done or not done. It is to you, to me, that this message is addressed. The WORD of God . . . the CONVERSATION (as it is sometimes translated) has come and is now part of us, it is part of our everyday living, our existence. This day God's love has come to us seeking to be born in our lives.\_\_\_\_ And the wonder of it is that it doesn't have to be just at Christmas that we feel this. Because what does the arrival of that Word do for me? What does it do for you? It reaches into our lives and touches us and delivers us from those things that make us less of a person than we are meant to be.

It brings near to us a Savior who forgives us when we cannot even forgive ourselves and loves us, even when we think we are unloveable. It is the Word that gives meaning and purpose to our lives and encourages us to live the life of Love that God calls us to and then walks beside us day by day as we strive to do that.\_\_\_\_

The importance of the passing of Christmas is that the EVENT of Christmas is a now message, a WORD and it is a personal Word of God to us. It is a message of Good News. ... The Word of God has come and now dwells among you. It is our message and when we hear it, really hear it, it is Christmas NOW. And not only today, but every day.

Amen.\_