

The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) – Mass During the Night  
Fr. Chad S. Green  
Holy Family Catholic Church  
Kirkland, Washington  
24/25 December 2017

Isaiah 9:1-6  
Psalm 96  
Titus 2:11-14  
(Luke 2:10-11) Luke 2:1-14

### *What Christmas Is All About*

Around Thanksgiving each year, one of the familiar signs that Christmas is on the way is when the television networks start showing Christmas specials; those movies and cartoons that all try to express something of what Christmas is all about. There are the more modern favorites: *Elf*; *Home Alone*; *A Christmas Story*. And there are the beloved classics: *It's a Wonderful Life*; *Miracle on 34<sup>th</sup> Street*. But the ones I remember best from my childhood – and still love today – are those wonderful animated specials from the 1960's: *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*; *Frosty the Snowman*.

And my favorite of all: *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. Poor Charlie Brown gets picked on and made fun of, and struggles to find joy and meaning in Christmas. When he brings a pathetic-looking Christmas Tree for the school Christmas pageant, it seems that, once again, everything Charlie Brown does turns into a disaster. When all his friends – and even his dog, Snoopy – break out in laughter at him, Charlie Brown yells out in desperation: “Isn’t there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?”<sup>i</sup>

Linus – with blue security blanket in hand – steps forward: “Sure, Charlie Brown, I can tell you what Christmas is all about.” Then, with spotlight shining on him, Linus recites the words of the very same Gospel that we just heard proclaimed on this holy night – the pronouncement of the birth of Jesus Christ: “The angel of the Lord appeared to [the shepherds saying]... ‘behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy... For today... a savior has been born for you... Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.’”<sup>ii</sup> When he finishes, Linus simply says, “That’s what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown.”

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Linus is right. That *is* what Christmas is all about. It's all about *hearing* the “good news of great joy” that “a Savior has been born for *you*” and for *me...for all of us...and for all people everywhere*. A Savior has come to us – to free us from our sins and lead us to eternal life. And our best response to *hearing* this Good News is simply...to *believe* and to *act* with faith.<sup>iii</sup>

At the Annunciation, His Mother, Mary, taught this lesson by her holy example. She *heard* the angel Gabriel reveal that she would conceive the Son of God.<sup>iv</sup> She *believed*<sup>v</sup> and she *acted* with faith: “May it be done to me according to your word.”<sup>vi</sup>

Years later, Jesus Himself taught His disciples the importance of this same lesson: “Blessed are those,” He said, “who *hear* the word of God...”<sup>vii</sup> “...and *act* on it.”<sup>viii</sup>

And on the holy night of Jesus' birth, the shepherds in the field also *heard* the angel of the Lord.<sup>ix</sup> They, too, *believed* what the angel told them and they *acted* with faith. They went in haste to *see for themselves* what the Lord had revealed to them. They went and found Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus lying in the manger.<sup>x</sup>

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My friends, tonight, *we* are like the shepherds. We have also *heard* about Jesus: maybe first from our parents or grandparents; from pastors or teachers; from friends or our own reading of Sacred Scripture. God has communicated with us; He has revealed Himself personally to each one of us. We have *heard* about Jesus and, like the shepherds, tonight...we *believe*...we *act* with faith. Like the shepherds, we come here on this holy night to *see for ourselves...to find Jesus*.

Every time we gather for the Mass and greet one another as the Body of Christ...we *see Jesus for ourselves*. When we hear about His loving acts of redemption in the Sacred

Scriptures...we *hear Jesus for ourselves*. When we receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist...we are nourished by Jesus and are united with Him in a most intense and intimate way.<sup>xi</sup> This Holy Mass is where we *hear* and *see Jesus for ourselves*; and we are strengthened in our *belief* that we do *find* Him in our lives. Not just tonight...not just tomorrow morning...but every day!

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My dear friends, this *is* what Christmas is all about. Christmas is all about *hearing*, *believing*, and *acting* with faith. *Hearing* that our Lord Jesus Christ was born into this world; *believing* that He is the Son of God who saves us from our sins; and *acting* on our faith – by not putting it off anymore: by coming to Mass each Sunday; by reading the Bible in our homes regularly; by praying to God for a few moments each day.<sup>xii</sup>

My dear friends, when we do these things as acts of faith, Christmas becomes all about *finding* that Jesus is *always* with us. Now that we've found Him, let us welcome Him to stay in our hearts forever! Merry Christmas!

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<sup>i</sup> Charles M. Schulz, *A Charlie Brown Christmas* (9 December 1965)

<sup>ii</sup> Luke 2:10-14

<sup>iii</sup> *Compendium of the Catechism of the Catholic Church* #25

<sup>iv</sup> Luke 1:31-32

<sup>v</sup> Luke 1:45

<sup>vi</sup> Luke 1:38

<sup>vii</sup> Luke 11:28

<sup>viii</sup> Luke 8:21

<sup>ix</sup> Luke 2:9-12

<sup>x</sup> Luke 2:15-16

<sup>xi</sup> *Sacrosanctum Concilium* 7

<sup>xii</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* 26: "Faith is man's response to God, who reveals himself and gives himself to man..."