

Reflection for December 25, 2015

Christmas Day



By Sister Mary Francis Fletcher, CDP

In the first of the Christmas liturgies, we sing, *Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.* We repeat this central belief over and over in our traditional and contemporary hymns. Accepting the powerful truth that Jesus came to live among us more than 2,000 years ago, we celebrate the Incarnation of God's Word, the Messiah sent by God to show us the face of divinity and to teach us how to live, guided by the Spirit of God.

WHAT can we write, say, or consider as we celebrate the birth of Jesus today? HOW does our own story intersect with the birth of Jesus for our world? I ask myself, HOW can I be filled with the amazement of the shepherds, the wonder of Mary and Joseph, or the commitment of the magi? I ponder WHEN will we understand more fully the tremendous grace and gift of God's love which this day and this season marks? Only then will we be passionate enough and compassionate enough to live our lives in ways which witness our amazement, our wonder, our commitment! Only then will we be moved by our deepened understanding and personal experience to take action to further the Kingdom inaugurated by Jesus!

On this day, we sing and we pray with Isaiah 9:1-6, *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light... You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing... For a child is born to us, a son is given us... His dominion is vast and forever peaceful.*

Do we see the brilliant light of God's grace and love and presence, a great light which dispels the dark horrors of war and the violence of groups bent on destruction? ...which lightens burdens carried by homeless people and refugee families? ...which overcomes the shadows cast by loneliness, insecurities, and fears?

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In a brief writing in “Goodness and Light,” a book of Advent/Christmas readings, Sarah Thebarge ended with these words:

During Advent, I’ve been thinking a lot about Immanuel, God with us. And I’ve been thinking a lot about how, as his followers, we get to live out the incarnation for each other. We get to be the tangible presence of Jesus in this world – a presence that shines light and makes peace and whispers love.

We get to be his feet that walk the extra mile; his eyes that look on even the most messy, marginalized people with love; and his arms that wrap around self-conscious, bullied, lonely teenage boys.

We get to whisper into the aching ears of this world, “God sees you. God loves you. God cares about you. Yes – even you.”

What we write or say or consider doesn’t need to be new. It does need to be deepened in us, strengthened in us. We can open our hearts by dwelling in the Scriptures and other readings, by listening deeply to our carols, and by allowing them space within to call us to generosity and service as Jesus did. We can allow Jesus to come to birth in us, to grow to maturity in us, so that, with Sarah Thebarge, we may become the women and men who use our feet, our eyes, our arms to hold others in the compassion of Jesus, the mercy of God, and the peace of God’s whispering presence, especially touching those others who are most in need of feeling, hearing, knowing, they are truly loved by God. May we be brought to great rejoicing and witness the coming of Jesus in our midst.