

But God is born among us, one like us in all things but sin. To save us all from Satans power and restore we, who have gone astray. Brothers and Sisters in the Lord, listen. God chose the people Israel our ancestors in faith and exalted them. He led them out of slavery. He raised up David as King, and according to His promise the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, son of David, and said, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home, for it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. John proclaimed his coming, the one of whom Isaiah prophesied, *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel*, which means "God is with us." And so, just as a man and woman are joined together in marriage, so to our Builder who has made his church of living stones, has made the church His bride; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall our God rejoice in us.

For us, the incarnation of God is a miracle but for God it is simply Love. This feast of the Nativity of our Lord is the earthquake in the history of God and creation that wakes up and calls out to us. We must not revel only in His coming but understand why He came. There is no salvation in His birth, and none without it. There is no salvation in the sinless way He lived His life, and none without him showing us the way. There is no salvation in His truth, His teaching, and none without it. There was a price to be paid for our sins. "For the wages of sin is death..." He was born to die for us. Only He, the Lamb of God, the pure lamb who slain could pay the price!

Those tiny hands and feet of the babe in the manger were formed so that one day nails might be pierce his innocence and disfigure his beauty. That warm and soft little body that was wrapped in swaddling clothes would one day be riven with a spear, from which his divine mercy would flow. The shadow of the cross through which we could be saved, was there from the very beginning.

From the time of Adam sin has pierced our innocence and disfigured our beauty, it has inclined us away from God to sin; it has engendered vice by repetition. It has resulted in perverse inclinations which cloud conscience and corrupt the concrete judgment of good and evil. Sin has reproduced itself and reinforced itself. The capital sins of, pride, avarice, envy, wrath, lust, gluttony, and sloth have given birth to all other sins. Especially, those "sins that cry to heaven": the blood of Abel, the cry of the people oppressed in Egypt, the cry of the foreigner, the widow, and the orphan, injustice to the wage earner, the sins against purity - those against the Divine and Natural laws.

These personal sins committed from the beginning are compounded over time and multiplied in their complex consequences drawing each into complicity in the sins committed by others.

- by participating directly and voluntarily;
- by ordering, advising, praising, or approving them;
- by not disclosing or not hindering them when we have an obligation to do so;
- by protecting those who do evil things.

Sin has made us accomplices of one another and caused concupiscence, violence, and injustice to reign among us. Sins have given rise to social situations and institutions that are contrary to the divine goodness. These "Structures of sin" are the expression and effect of personal sins which lead their victims to do evil in their turn.

Yet here we are, together because of what happened on this night before we all were born. Because even in the midst of our brokenness, we have hope. In fact, since this night, the world has never been without hope and the Church of Christ built upon Peter the rock foundation, cannot and will not ever fall to the enemy.

Look around. We are, all of us, like those on that night. Among us are the poor to whom is proclaimed the good news of salvation. We are the prisoners who have been set free. The sorrowful of heart who receive Joy. We are those who, in awe and wonder for the Lord, receive his mercy. We are the humble who are lifted up. We are the hungry who have received our daily bread, we are his servants he has come to help. We are simple shepherds and farmers of our day, we are the sick in need of healing. We are the lost and the lonely, to whom he comes to comfort. We are the prodigal children.

He does all of this for us, so that we can be free to live in His peace with goodwill toward others. That we might live no longer for ourselves but for him who died and rose again for us. Who has given us the Holy Spirit to sanctify us to the full.

After the closing prayer and blessing.

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We don't have to allow those deadly sins to run and ruin our lives, our families, our county, our world. We don't have to let them divide us and set us against each other. We don't have to get ahead at the expense of others. We don't have to succeed at all costs in the world.

We can change the world, by individually becoming Saints and helping others to do the same. The question tonight, is... will you kneel before Him and let him do in and for you all he desires and came to do? Will you renew your life in His. Renew your family in His. Follow me now, as we place this symbol of the child Jesus in a manger, take your place in that sacred moment of His nativity... and spend a few moments in prayer... share your heart with Him, with Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Then, go home and continue to enter more deeply into this great mystery of God's love and our salvation.