



Thursday's Devotional 12/24/2020

Today's Scripture: Luke 2:1-20

"In those days, a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for see – I am bringing you good news of a great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among

those whom he favors.'

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So, they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they heard and seen, as it had been told them."

Reflection:

There are many elements to this story of Jesus' birth –the journey that Mary and Joseph had to make so late in her pregnancy; Mary giving birth to God's son in a stable and using the animals' manger, where they ate their food, for his bed; the angel speaking to the shepherds; the multitude of angels who appear, singing and praising God; the shepherds' decision to go to Bethlehem and see the baby; Mary and Joseph listening to the shepherd's story; Mary, later, after the shepherds left, quietly thinking of all that had happened.

What part of this story really captures your heart?

Which part speaks to you most strongly?

What is it about that particular part that you find especially moving?

Today's Prayer: (a prayer for Christmas Eve)

To God Our Father, most Prefect and most High:

How we bubble tonight with anticipation and excitement of the events so soon to come. Yet, we are amazed and puzzled and curious and just a little frightened, all at the same time!

You have promised to deliver us a savior tonight, who is Christ the Lord, but Father, forgive us. . .

We cannot get our heads around the stark contrasts:

-of the pageantry of singing angels with trumpets blaring, set against the poverty and bleakness of a weary couple and their newborn, shivering in a cold and lonely stable --

-of a child who commands the attention and gifts of Kings from across an

entire continent, and yet must flee with his parents to Egypt to avoid an early death --

-of a King who owns nothing, not even a common goat, and lives and eats with prostitutes and tax collectors and outcasts and the sick and afflicted!

Oh God, what does it all mean for me? How can I be worthy of this King?

You have promised to deliver us a savior tonight, who is Christ our Lord.

So, please Lord, accept me as I am, complete with my human weaknesses and failures. I am not worthy of this Gift, and yet you give it freely, openly. It must be because you LOVE me, not because I deserve it.

And it is a miracle that it all begins with a tiny baby, in a humble stable, to be born this night in Bethlehem! God, I resolve to discover and study and share my life with this Gift of a Savior, this baby, this Jesus.

You have promised to deliver us a savior tonight, who is Christ our Lord. I believe you, Lord, with all my heart. Come, O Come, Emanuel.

Amen