



Bible Study Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord Mass at Dawn Year A

**St. Maria Goretti and
St. Peter Claver
Parishes**

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When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. Lk. 2:17-18 NABRE

Reading I: Isaiah 62:11-12

GO TELL EVERYONE! *"The joy of the Gospel fills the hearts and lives of all who encounter Jesus. Those who accept His offer of salvation are set free from sin, sorrow, inner emptiness and loneliness. With Christ, joy is constantly born anew."* These words are from the introductory paragraph of Pope Francis' first apostolic exhortation, titled *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel). It is the joy of the good news that we have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus that compels us to tell everyone.

This Advent Season we prepared for the coming of Jesus with the theme of *"Walk in the Light."* During each week, we walked in God's light, putting on the armor of light, which is a spiritual way of life which required: us to be witnesses for



**Let us Go and Tell Everyone
About This Child.**

Jesus Christ, that we tell the truth, and trust, and by obeying the Word of God. Now we can proclaim to the world that Christ is reborn in us.

In the first reading, God proclaimed to the ends of the earth that though Israel had been decimated, it was still destined for greatness (v. 11). Note the personal nature of these verses. They were written after Israel's return from exile in Babylon to a ravaged country. Isaiah proclaimed God's words of encouragement to His holy people. God proclaimed to all nations that He is the Savior of Israel, His Chosen people. He declared that Zion, another name for Jerusalem, is God's dwelling place and has been made holy by His presence. He proclaimed victory over death and destruction (v. 12). God has come to Israel. He comes to us as well. He has redeemed us by His death. He has chosen us as His people, so that we can be holy and He can dwell in us. Isn't that good news? Now go tell everyone! **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** What has God revealed about Himself to you during the four weeks of Advent?

Rejoice in the Gospel, and the Glory of Christ's Cross

The great danger in today's world, pervaded as it is by consumerism, is the desolation and anguish born of a complacent yet covetous heart, the feverish pursuit of frivolous pleasures, and a blunted conscience. Whenever our interior life becomes caught up in its own interests and concerns, there is no longer room for others, no place for the poor. God's voice is no longer heard, the quiet joy of his love is no longer felt, and the desire to do good fades. This is a very real danger for believers too. Many fall prey to it, and end up resentful, angry and listless. That is no way to live a dignified and fulfilled life; it is not God's will for us, nor is it the life in the Spirit which has its source in the heart of the risen Christ.

Source: Pope Francis - *Evangelii Gaudium* (Joy of the Gospel) I. 2

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium_en.html

Reading II: Titus 3:4-7

GO TELL EVERYONE! In this letter to Titus, St. Paul encourages him to be zealous for the spread of the Gospel and counsels him on ministerial methods. Titus became a Christian, a companion to St. Paul and an overseer of the Church in Crete. St. Paul encourages Titus and those whom he shepherds to proclaim the Gospel by the way they live. Goodness and loving kindness must be present in their lives.

As justification for these encouraging words, St. Paul shows that the incarnation can only be explained by the mercy of God vv. 3-4. In the same way, our conduct must be defined by mercy. The Holy Spirit, the presence of God in us, is richly and freely poured out to us through Jesus Christ. Just as the incarnation could only be explained by the mercy of God, our conduct must reflect God's merciful presence within us. When our conduct reflects the mercy of God and the love of Jesus Christ, we tell everyone about our Savior. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** How do you demonstrate the God's merciful presence in your life?

Gospel: Luke 2:15-20

GO TELL EVERYONE! "All the Lord's done for you, you're telling me you don't have nothing to say? You can't tell it, oh let me tell it. Get all worked up, go tell somebody and if they look at you a little strange, Tell 'em "let me tell it!" These are the lyrics of a popular song by Commissioned that express the unspeakable joy of redemption. The shepherds in the Gospel personify these lyrics, as they seem to have a need to tell the world what God revealed to them through the message of the angels.

The Gospel tells us that the first announcement of Jesus' birth to the world came to shepherds. Shepherds were generally despised by the orthodox "good" people of their day. Their occupation prevented them from keeping the details of the Jewish ceremonial laws. They could not observe all the meticulous hand-washings, and rules and regulations. Their flocks made constant demands on them. Their occupations kept them from the upper wrung of society. God's message first came to this group of people. His message of salvation is for everyone.

Even in our busy lives, God's message also comes to us. We received Him the first time in the Sacrament of Baptism, when God came to dwell in us. We, therefore, are bound to tell everyone that God lives in us.

The shepherds give us three tools that help us tell to everyone about Jesus the Christ. 1. We must accept the words of the messengers of God. The words, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing," in verse 15, shows their acceptance of His presence. Note that the shepherds' acceptance was followed by action. They went immediately to see the "thing." The word *thing* means, *that which is or has been uttered by a living voice.* Acceptance means to bring into ones being or understanding. If we don't accept the Word of God, or His presence, we will not react. We will be complacent.

2. The shepherds' actions tell us that we have to "go over," or act immediately. Complacency or inaction is not the way of the follower of Christ. We must live the Word of God as a sign of our acceptance. The shepherds' actions were rewarded with the vision of the Holy Family; Jesus, Mary and Joseph. Mary's position in verse 16 is Luke's reiteration of the privileged position given to Mary at the Annunciation (1:26-38). The shepherds became witnesses to God's presence among His people as foretold by Isaiah. (See First Reading)

3. The shepherds' actions show us that we must tell everyone that God dwells in us. We show His presence by showing kindness, mercy, patience, love and all of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Those who received the message of the shepherds received God's revelation of Himself. The shepherds, therefore, became the voice of God. That's why we must go and tell everyone what the Lord has done for us. Let's tell everyone! **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Who will you tell that God dwells in you?

PRAY ABOUT IT!

**A CHRISTMAS PRAYER
LORD YOU ARE WITH US!**

Dearest God, Holy Creator, Joy of the world! Hope of tomorrow! Light of heaven! Lover of humanity! You are the Creator of everything; through your word the world and everything in it exists. You are the maker of red berried holly trees, of fragrant Christmas trees, of tinsel sparkling with many colors of light, of carols to be sung, of gifts given and received, of children born, of blessed rest everlasting, of everything which is beautiful, which is lovely, which is good.

Be with us, Holy Lord of heaven and earth, live among us, let us feel your presence, as we celebrate the birth of your child, your gift, your love, who came to live, grow, and teach among us. May our hearts always be young in your love. Amen.

**The Christmas Mystery
From the Catechism of the Catholic
Church**

525 Jesus was born in a humble stable, into a poor family. Simple shepherds were the first witnesses to this event. In this poverty heaven's glory was made manifest. The Church never tires of singing the glory of this night:

*The Virgin today brings into the world the Eternal
And the earth offers a cave to the Inaccessible.
The angels and shepherds praise him
And the magi advance with the star,
For you are born for us, Little Child, God eternal!*

Resources: *The Gospel of Luke*, Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, Commentary Notes & Study Questions. Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition, Scott Hahn, Curtis Mitch, Denise Walters Ignatius Press San Francisco; p. 23-25; *The Sunday Readings Cycle* C Kevin O'Sullivan, O. F. M. Franciscan Press, Quincy University, Quincy, Ill. pp. 27-42; Titus, Jerome H. Neyrey, Collegeville Bible Commentary, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville Minn., p.1215-1218; *Living Liturgy Spirituality, Celebration, and Catechesis for Sundays and Solemnities Year C* 2014, Joyce Zimmerman, C. PP. S.

This meditation is prepared by Deacon Terrel J. Broussard for personal use in Adult Faith Formation at St. Peter Claver and St Maria Goretti Parishes in New Orleans, La. ©2013