

Fr. Samuel's Homily

Christmas, December 25, 2017



One of the things that I like most about Christmas is that so many people come to church. In the course of our Christmas Masses we will have about 3 times the number of people here that we have at regular weekend Masses. I know that there are those dour souls who comment disparagingly, “Oh so many are those who just come at Christmas and Easter.” To that I say, “It is just wonderful that so many are here.”

Why do I say that? Well it gives me greater hope for humanity and for this often frightening world to see you here. In a world in which division, greed, prejudice, and hatred take so many forms, ranging from petty arguments to wars and other ways we make one another suffer, the fact that so many people come to church on Christmas tells me that we can be better than we too often are during the rest of the year. I think that we come because there is a place in the human heart that hopes for and believes in something better. I think that deep down we all really do want to believe in peace on earth and good will to all.

Many years ago I had a conversation with a friend who was a practicing Hindu. He was thinking about converting to the Catholic faith. He had been reading about the faith and he was very much taken by the teachings of Jesus Christ. After a rather long conversation about what he was discovering about the faith he said something that has always stayed with me. He said, “The teaching of Jesus Christ is so wonderful that, it is worth it to put aside any doubts and just to believe it. I think that that will make me a better person living in this world.”

I think that most of us want to be better people in how we live in this world. I think that God came to us in Jesus Christ because God believes that about us as well. God knows that we mess up, often big time. God knows that we can be petty, cruel, selfish and arrogant. But God also knows that there is at the very core of every human being something of great beauty—something that can make us wonderful. God knows that, no matter how distracted we get from it, love dwells at the core of every human heart.

It is so easy to lose sight of that as we live our daily lives in this world. Often we are encouraged to lose sight of it and to place our faith and trust in things that make us so much less than what we could be if we could just keep that love in full focus. But the wonderful thing is that Jesus taught us that God never loses His focus. God knows who and what we can be and He continually calls us to that. He gives us the means through His Church. He offers us spiritual sustenance in the Eucharist and forgiveness when we need it. When we get lost God remains with us even though, sometimes we may not think that He is there. God asks of us that we gather here in faith community where He can remind us, especially when we face challenges and suffering, that He remains with us. He walks with us through such times and, if we are willing to join our

crosses to His, He brings us to new days of resurrection, helping us to transform even suffering into something that makes us better people.

On this day, this Christmas day, we remember His coming to us as a child. As you know, a child is full of promise. A child is one in whom we can place our hope for the future. A child is weak and vulnerable but maybe Jesus came to us in that way to teach us that promise and hope do remain. We just have to open our hearts to it. We may sometimes or even often feel weak and not so full of promise as we live our daily lives in this world. However, in the simple act of coming here, we affirm that that hope does remain in us. With that Christmas can be for us all an affirmation that the world does not have to be as it too often is. Through us and through that love that we affirm on this day, God's hope, which He affirmed by coming to us in Jesus Christ, can move toward fulfillment.