

Homily122516

**HE SAID HE WOULD COME...AND HE CAME!**

(But the Lord did not say how he would come and so we did not expect a baby, nor from poverty.

Our God is truly a God of surprises. Glory be to God!)

I have been there. I have been to Bethlehem. I have been in the Church of the Nativity. I have waited at the small, cramped winding steps going down into what is left of the stable. It is not all glorious. It is humble. It is ordinary. It shows the effects of time. But there is a stillness there. There is an icon of Mary at the head of the steps. She is smiling. It is the only known icon of Mary smiling. She has reason to smile. She has brought forth her firstborn. A son. He is to be the Savior of our world. That is the story. We all know it. It touches our hearts. It moves us when finally we sit back and listen and relax just a little before we set forth to finish whatever tasks still await us. And there are always tasks that still await us.

That was then. Fast forward to 2016. In many ways this has been a very difficult year. In some ways a brutal year. In most cases an unsettling year. Sometimes we sense things slipping away from us, out of our control, beyond our ability to repair or straighten. Beyond even our leaders to lead us, perhaps. And as I sit with that thought it gently occurs to me that it is valuable for me to come to this realization. For what is beyond our ability to fix or repair or make right again is precisely why God has sent his beloved Son to save us, to show us what to do, how to live and what is truly important. Jesus is the One.

Long ago God said that He would come to us. And after many years, at just the best moment, He came. God came not in the extraordinary but precisely in the ordinary. God came in the ordinary. God still comes in the ordinary. And it surprised people then and it still surprises us today. Like that first Christmas his daily coming is unknown. Hiding in plain sight as Jesus did in Nazareth. But ask yourself: If people in this world embraced the way of Jesus, if we truly lived loving one another and loving God with everything we have and everything we are, wouldn't this world be a better place? We are exhausted. Who can replenish us at the deepest part of us? What can replenish my soul? Or better, Who can replenish my soul? I assure I cannot replenish my soul nor yours. But I believe that Jesus can.

Ask yourself sometime today this question. Have I embraced Him, the Christ child? And His Way? A lot? A little bit? Occasionally? All in? Think back to the story when the angel Gabriel visits Mary and invites her to make the gift of herself so that the Savior might be born in the flesh. What is Gabriel asking Mary in that moment? Will you become a place where God can be? Will you become a place where God can be? Look at the manger. Your soul and my soul—each is a personal interior manger. Will I be a place where God can be? The question is not just of Mary. The question is for each of us. And each of us is capable of answering with our own “Yes!”

I want you to think of these five words. “I ask you to stay.” And I want you to say them, pray them sometime this day in the quiet place in your own heart to Jesus. “Lord, I ask you to stay.” That is really what you want and that is really what He wants. We believe in a God who promised to come to us and who kept his promise. He came to us. He was welcomed by Mary and Joseph and then by many others. HE COMES EVERY TIME HIS LAST SUPPER WORDS ARE PRAYED IN FAITH BY THE PRIEST WITH HIS PEOPLE IN EUCHARIST, SINCE THAT FIRST CHRISTMAS IN 2000 YEARS THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A TIME WHEN HE DID NOT COME—EVER. HE WILL BE HERE VERY SOON. BELIEVE IT. BELIEVE IN HIM. MERRY CHRISTMAS!