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25th December 2020 The Nativity of Our Lord

*“God with you”*

A homily based on Isaiah 62. 6-12, Titus 3. 4-7 and Luke 2. 1-20 for the congregations of The Glamorgan Heritage Coast Ministry Area and surrounding communities.

My friends in Christ,

I bring you news of great joy: **a saviour has been born to us. Alleluia.** Unto us a child is born, **unto us a Son is given. Alleluia.** He is Christ the Lord. Alleluia. **We worship and adore him. Alleluia.**

O come, let us adore him

Today is the 25th December, Christmas Day and I would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas.

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus, on this Christmas, fill us with the joy and wonder which the shepherds shared with Mary and Joseph. May our hearts and our homes be filled with the peace and love you shared with the world. **Amen.**

**A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.**

Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted sentinels; all day and all night they shall never be silent. You who remind the Lord, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it renowned throughout the earth.
The Lord has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink the wine for which you have laboured; but those who garner it shall eat it and praise the Lord, and those who gather it shall drink it in my holy courts.

Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway, clear it of stones, lift up an ensign over the peoples.

The Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth:

Say to daughter Zion, ‘See, your salvation comes; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him.’ They shall be called, ‘The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord’; and you shall be called, ‘Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.’

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church: **Thanks be to God.**

**A reading from the letter to Titus.**

But when the goodness and loving-kindness of God our Saviour appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church: **Thanks be to God.**

**A reading from the Gospel of St Luke**

**Alleluia, Alleluia I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day a Saviour, Christ the Lord. Alleluia!**

 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 place 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 great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, 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 favours!’

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 had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

**This is the Gospel of the Lord.**

**Homily**

On Christmas day, the fulfilment of the long wait is realized, as ‘Come, thou Long-Expected Jesus’ gives way to ‘Joy to the World’. At the beginning of Advent, we were like sentinels from our reading from Isaiah posted to watch, to wait, to persistently pray in expectation for the coming of the messiah when the world, our communities and very families ached during this pandemic. Now we might have been tired and dispirited at times- it has been difficult to find joy. You may have heard those of little or no faith tell you in not so many words, that the church is finished, that your ‘God’ has given up on you.

Yet today we rise in joy, for we are not abandoned by God. We clear the rubble and rocks from God’s highway for all people for we are reminded that those who have walk in darkness, have seen a great light, for a child is born. God has not been asleep through these dark and difficult times, just as he has not been asleep since he placed every star to light the night sky. For we are presented today with the birth of a saviour as the light who dispels the deepest darkness.

There in the sweat, blood, make-shift blankets of the Bethlehem stable, there is this raw, immediate joy that comes with new life. We reverence with joy, this love of God which shows itself in the fragile bundle of the child Jesus and we celebrate our love of God through Jesus. For we exist and love him, because he created and loved us first: He delights in us, He seeks us, He does not forsake us. He redeems us. God rejoices over us.

This baby, as we know will grow up. He will take a lot of people to heart and suffer because of his love for others. Through God’s great love for us, Jesus assumed our frailty, our suffering, our anxieties, our limitations and gives us the grace of this closeness in the face of need and the pain of separation. Separation from those who have reared and raised us and those who care for us deeply and bring joy to our lives and us to them.

With millions spending Christmas away from their families, we see this reflected in the unsettling responsibilities confronted by the Holy Family as they headed to a place which is uncomfortable and an utterly new experience. But being away from home as unsettling as it might be this Holy Family do not appear destabilized. Mary and Joseph make a home where there is no home. Gathered in the dim candlelight of the stable, there where the child lays, the story tells us, is home. In the loneliness and isolation, our saviour is the one in whom our unsettledness gives way to joy and peace.

Whatever Christmas looks like this year to you, remember that God comes to the unassuming and unsettled. God loves you and continues to be with you in your joys, your sorrows, your hopes and your fears. May He grant you a happy, blessed and holy Christmas. **Amen.**

**The prayer for this week is called ‘Your Kingdom Come’.**

Lord God,
as we welcome you this Christmas
and celebrate your birth, help us to pray:
with your words, your longing, your hope,
your joy, your compassion.
That your kingdom may truly come
and all creation celebrate your presence among us
through pain and happiness,
where there is need and where there is plenty.
We ask this in the name of Jesus,
Child of the crib and Prince of peace. **Amen.**

 I hope that you have a day full of the peace of Christ and the joy that the incarnation brings.

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Wishing you all a Happy and Blessed Christmas,

*Fr Craig Duw a digon*

**Reverend Fr Craig Vaughan****Vicar in The Glamorgan Heritage Coast Ministry Area**

