

## **Christmas Eve-Day**

**December 24, 2020**

All Years RCL Selection I

Isaiah 9:2-7; Psalm 96; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14(15-20)

**"You will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger."**

By: The Rev. Fr. Fabian Villalobos

Today I am especially grateful for the opportunity of celebrating the most sacred moment of our Christian life- the Birth of our Lord and Savior with each of you. I would like to invite you to consider that this Christmas liturgy offers a testimony about God's closeness to the human pain that we normally ignore, especially when we reduce the Incarnation of Jesus only to a joyful annual celebration that disregards all distress and sorrow this is impossible to dissociate from Jesus' life from his birth to his death. This year our celebration is in solidarity with so much pain and mourning that is present in the world. Our affection and love go to those who have lost loved ones and those whose lives were forever changed by the pandemic.

Even so with the exacerbating pain that surrounds us, the celebration of Christmas is also an occasion to receive the consolations of God who knows very well the human heart. For this reason, although virtually, masked or physically separated at this moment, we learn that the incarnate presence of God in the world is greater than all the suffering and distress that we can have.

The Most Reverend and Right Honorable Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, in his Ecumenical Christmas Letter 2020 reminds us that Christmas is more than a beautiful celebration:

“In recent correspondence I have been asked on more than one occasion whether Christmas should be postponed this year as it cannot be celebrated with all the liturgical and social customs and traditions that the people of God value so much. However, as I look around the world and through the world’s history it is clear that the celebration of the incarnation is always grounded in our acknowledgement that the world is fragile and suffering. Our Lord was born in our fallen world and it is in his birth, death and resurrection that we find hope. People face sickness, war, displacement and poverty every day and, in joy and suffering alike, the birth of Christ is marked and celebrated as a constant reminder of our salvation.

As the early teacher of our faith Justin Martyr wrote:

He became a human being for our sakes, that becoming a partaker of our sufferings, He might also bring us healing. (Second Apology, Chapter XIII)

Christ came to a suffering world to bring healing, reconciliation and hope. As I hear stories of the response of the Church to human suffering in different parts of the world I see that hope made real. Churches and individual Christians are reaching out in love to those in need: most often not from a position of power, but in vulnerability. That is exactly the sort of love that we celebrate at Christmas. Love that gets its hands dirty. Love that is open and generous. Love that, without great ceremony, makes a difference. Jesus Christ, the light of the world, shines even in the darkest times: for that we are thankful and in that we rejoice.” The Archbishop of Canterbury's Ecumenical Christmas Letter 2020

Christmas thus celebrates Jesus’ Incarnation not from a position of power and prestige, but from the humility and generosity of God who became human to redeem the sinful humanity. The Christ Child who is born for us knows intimately the sufferance and distress each person has. He owns the whole

world and ironically there is not room for him or his family in the inn. The absence for a physical space since the beginning of his life, shows the struggle Jesus will have in order to be accepted among all those who denied him throughout history.

The night he has been born, we heard that his parents were travelers in Nazareth. They went there to participate in the census ordered by the Emperor Augustus. It was there far from their land or loved ones that the miracle of new life happens. Notice how much pain is present in this story of the gospel, Jesus' family was homeless during that night when God allows his Son to become flesh like one of us.

This is a testimony for all of us to think and pray for our brothers and sisters whose Christmas is full of sorrow and grief with the memories of loved ones who have been taken away or those whose lives had changed with perpetual consequences during this year 2020. We are called to contemplate in silence the child who is born and lying in the manger. He is just a baby, helpless, needy, dependent, and yet He is Sovereign, Powerful, and Almighty. The mystery of God is all on display with the divine logic that surprises and surpasses all human understanding. The love of God is manifested in the

vulnerability and precarity of the newborn child wrapped in bands of cloth and laying in a manger.

Even with the fragility and susceptibility of the newborn baby, God's incarnation in Jesus offers for the broken world both healing and reconciliation. This gift of perennial love is the most important gift that the Emmanuel -God with us- brought to us and to those who struggle with sin, illness, and death.

The new life of the baby lying in the manger at Christmas is the anticipation of the new life of the Resurrected Lord of Easter. It is important to remember that before resurrecting, he suffered his passion and was crucified. This helps us understand that God is really in solidarity with our sufferings. Though his power and love are manifested in a way that can leave us bewildered and confused, God is present with us all the time.

The night He was born, there was a presence of shepherds and choirs of angels representing the double nature of Jesus, human and divine. They all received the most important news which brings consolation of peace until this day to us all and forevermore. "To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord." Even in the darkest night in which we

live it is important to remember that God is always with us and his love is without limits for each one of us. Amen.