

Solemn Feast of Christmas – Nativity of the Lord

December 25, 2021

From the desk of Fr. Paulo ofm cap.

Wishing every parishioner, a heartfelt Mele Kalikimaka!

On this solemn celebration of the birth of our Lord, let us with gratitude welcome our Savior Jesus Christ into our hearts, whom God the Father has sent to redeem us.

I think we can honestly say that Christmas 2021 is less gloomy than in the year 2020 though nothing like the past festive Christmas parish gatherings. Like relics of the past color posters and creative parish projects adorn the walls of our parish St. Damien and St. Marianne Social Hall

The lingering presence of Covid – 19 has placed upon us all a sense of certain helplessness and emptiness as a parish ohana. I am sure many of us feel the sense of disconnect as we have lost many months of interaction and sharing in person our faith and parish events.

Yet still the celebration of the Solemn Feast of Christmas calls us all to rejoice. Rejoice that God sent His only Son, Jesus Christ as our redeemer, and that in His hand rests all things and thus even this difficult period of trial need not crush our spirit. That we bear witness to the world by our Christian joy and faithfulness to the Gospel.

On this wonderful Solemn Feast of Christmas – Nativity of the Lord let the joyous greetings of **“Merry Christmas – Maligayang Pasko - Feliz Pusgua –**

Feliz Navidad- Manuia le Kirisimasi – Joyeux Noel – Buon Natale – Kilisimasi Fiefia and in all tongues of nations ring out!” Even though the secularized world can only utter **“Happy Holidays”** rationalizing lest they offend others who may not share the Christian Faith, yet Christmas is a Christian heritage. Christians must unabashedly speak out loudly **“Merry Christmas “** and they greet others this Season of Christmas!

Mahalo nui loa to many parishioners who prepared the parish church, both inside and outside for the Solemn Feast of Christmas. Without your generosity with **Time and Talents** all these preparations would not have taken place and such beautiful celebration of Christmas would not have been possible!

God bless you all!

Have a Blessed Week in the Lord!

Fr. Paulo ofm cap.

LOOKING AHEAD:

NEW YEAR JANUARY 1, 2022 - SOLEMNITY of MARY the MOTHER of GOD

YEAR 2022 New Year's Day, January 1st falls perfectly on First Saturday. We will have the traditional 9:00am Mass for the **Solemnity of Mary the Mother of God**, entrusting the coming year 2022 into the hands of our Blessed Mother.

The Rosary will be prayed at 8:30am before the Mass. All parishioners are invited!

January 1st. Vigil Mass 4:30pm

January 2nd Sunday Masses: 7:00am 8:30am and 10:00am

January 8th Saturday, 7:00am Mass, 4:00pm confessions & 4:30pm Vigil Mass

January 9th Sunday Masses, 7:00am, 8:30am and 10:00am

MONTH of JANUARY 2022 EUCHARISTIC ADORATION.

Our Eucharistic Adoration will take place **Tuesday, January 4th starting with 8:30am Mass** followed by the hourly adoration.

9am – 10am	10am – 11am	11am – 12noon	12noon – 1:pm	1pm – 2:pm
2:pm – 3:pm	3:pm – 4:pm	4pm Closing Benediction		

Scripture Reflections – Nativity of the Lord - Christmas Day Mass

Old Testament: Isaiah 52: 7 – 18

Background Context.

These words were written by a disciple of the great prophet Isaiah, most probably during the time Babylonian Exile, to encourage the Jewish exiles. Their God would set them free and return them once more to a clean and purified Jerusalem. But this return, like the Exodus from Egypt centuries earlier, was a type of a foreshadowing of the greater redemption that was to come.

The possession of eternal “**promised land**” which were to be given in the days to come, not only to Israel but to all nations.

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings: The person who brings tidings of goodness is always welcome. The writer sees the announcer of the good news as already present. His good news is that salvation is at hand, that peace has come, that war and exiles are over. The Jewish exiles in Babylon would naturally understand this of their return to Jerusalem, but here was much more than that in this message.

Saying to Zion, your God is King: Many of the Jewish exiles expected the Davidic monarchy to be restored upon their return, because of the promise given to David (**2 Samuel 7: 14**). But the returned exiles had no king until the true descendant of David, the promised Messiah, came. He was King, as he admitted to Pontius Pilate and as the title on his Cross proclaimed, **“The King of the Jews”** but his kingdom **“was not of this world.”**

Hark! Your sentinels raise a cry, together they shout for joy: There were no watchmen on the walls of Jerusalem at the time as there were no walls and no city (Jerusalem was destroyed and Israelites were in exile) but the prophet sees the future day when God will **“redeem Jerusalem and comfort his people.”**

The Lord has bared his holy arm in the sight of all the nations: God has shown his power to all the nations.

All the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God: the salvation which the prophet Isaiah foresees is not just the return of the Jews from Babylonian exile which was for the Jews alone and did not interest the other nations, but the universal redemption of all men and women in the messianic age.

New Testament: Hebrews 1: 1 – 6

Background Context.

Down through almost two thousand years God spoke to the Chosen People through his mighty deeds and through his mouthpieces the patriarchs and the prophets.

In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets: Now in time fulfilled, God speaks to them in his only Son, Jesus Christ.

In these last days he has spoken to us through his Son: At various times and in various ways. The author is thus bringing out the imperfection of the Old revelation when compared with the New (Jesus Christ) which was once and for all by One Person – Son of God.

Whom he made heirs of all things: In his human nature after his resurrection Jesus Christ was made heir of all things. As God in his divine nature, Jesus Christ was from eternity heirs of all things, for he is the Son of God.

Through whom he created the universe: The preexistence of Jesus Christ is stated here, namely, in his divine nature. The Son of God co-operated with the Father and the Holy spirit in the act of creation. In the Old Testament (Wisdom books), wisdom cooperated with God in creation, where wisdom is personified and is really the Son (**Proverbs 8:30, Wisdom 7:22**).

Who is the refulgence of his glory: Here the author is possibly using a more ancient liturgical hymn to give some idea of the divine nature of the Son in relation to the Father. He is the reflection, the refulgence, the glory of the Father, as one's face is reflected in a mirror of one who is the refulgence, the reflected glory of God the Father.

The very imprint of his being: The Greek word translated "**representation**" is "**character**", the imprint of a seal, the mark of one thing found on something else. This stresses the exact similarity but at the same time the distinction of the one from the other.

Who sustains all things by his mighty word: The Son maintains all creation in existence and directs their course "**by his word of power**" - powerful Word. All this stresses his divinity in which he is equal to the Father.

When he had accomplished purification from sins: Through his death on his human nature, the Son, Christ, has redeemed humankind.

He took his seat at the right hand of Majesty on high: After his resurrection he has the place of honor in heaven in his human nature.

As far superior to the angels: The aim of the writer of this Epistle of Hebrews was to show the superiority of the New Covenant over the Old. It was superior because it was given by the **Son of God** who is superior not only to the prophets, priests, and patriarchs but to the angels, the heavenly messengers sent from heaven in the old dispensation.

As the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs: The words of **Psalm 2: 7** and of **2 Samuel 7: 14** refers directly to the King but in their fuller sense they are fulfilled only in Christ. This is the inspired interpretation of the author of Hebrews.

You are my son; this day I have begotten you. Let all the angels of God worship him: If the angels must adore the Son, they are inferior to him (**Daniel 32: 43**)

Gospel: John 1: 1 – 18

Background Context.

The Gospel according to St. John was written long after the three other Synoptic Gospels of St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke. The essentials of the Christian faith had already been

preached and accepted by thousands of Jews and Gentiles throughout the then known world, the Roman Empire.

The basic doctrine of the faith, that **Jesus Christ** who lived and died in Palestine, rose from the dead and ascended to heaven, was not a mere human but was the **Son of God** who took human nature for our salvation. This basic doctrine had been preached and believed for over sixty years before St. John's Gospel was written.

The other three Evangelists had already given a written, they too had as their basic tenet the Incarnation.

But St. John's Gospel gives a more profoundly theological vision of Jesus Christ, the result of years of preaching and of meditation on this wondrous mystery of God's love.

And while stressing the divinity of Jesus Christ St. John leaves no doubt as to the reality of Jesus Christ's human nature. It was the God – Man on whose breast St. John learned at the Last Supper of whom he wrote.

In the beginning: While St. Mark begins with Christ's public life and St. Matthew and St. Luke go back to the birth in Bethlehem, St. John goes back to the beginning of time, when creation began.

Was the Word: Christ already was. The Greek imperfect translated "**was**" means continuous, timeless existence.

The Word: St. John uses this Greek term "**logos**" = word to describe the Son as the emanation, the reproduction, the utterance of God. In the Old Testament the word of God meant the revelation of himself in power, in grace in prophecy.

Word was God: This "**word**" who was divine, was from eternity, was at the same time distinct from the Father. (God with the article = Father in New Testament), so there are two persons at least two distinct individuals in the Godhead. God here without the article means the divinity. A clear statement that this Word was divine.

All things came to through him and without him, nothing came to be: This **Second Person** in the Godhead cooperated in the creation of all things, so he is not only distinct from creatures; he is their co-creator.

What came to be through him was life and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it: Supernatural life and light of revelation. The act of creation mentioned, referred to the natural life given us.

A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him: This refers to John the Baptist whose preaching prepared for

the public ministry of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist spoke of the revelation, the light of the expected Messiah which was imminent.

The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the came to be through him but the world did not know him: God should have been known through his creatures (**Romans 1: 18-23**) if men and women used their intelligence but they did not.

He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him: He came in the Incarnation to his own Chosen People and told them who he was, the Messiah and the Son of God, but they, that is, their leaders especially received him not.

But to those who accept him he gave power to become children of God: The purpose of the Incarnation was to raise humanity to the supernatural level of adopted sons and daughters of God, those who accept Jesus Christ and keep his doctrine are capable of this divine sonship and daughter-ship.

To those who believed in his name: Name stands for person, belief in Christ is belief that he is the Son of God and therefore the source of all grace and truth.

Who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God: Those who accept Christ are re-born, regenerated, in a way that is not like the natural conception and birth, it is spiritual, it is "of God." This verse can possibly refer to the human birth of Jesus Christ, too, namely, his birth from a virgin without human father.

And the Word became flesh: The Word was divine and continued to be divine, but at a particular time moment in history (**Greek aorist**) it assumed human nature. The word flesh: which St. John uses here was used in the Old Testament to signify all that was transitory, mortal, lowly and imperfect. St. John is here stressing the humiliation "**the emptying of himself**" as **St. Paul- Philippians 2: 6, puts it.**

And made his dwelt among us: "Pitched his tent in Greek", became one of our tribes, one with us.

The glory of the Father's only Son, full of glory and truth: St. John was one of the first of four disciples who followed Jesus Christ. He was therefore a witness of Jesus Christ's public life from Jordan to the Ascension.

Father's only Son: having brought the hymn of the Incarnation to its climax, the Word taking flesh, St. John does not use this term Word anymore, he speaks of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me: Evidently John the Baptist knew by revelation of the divinity of Jesus Christ. John the Baptist was senior to Jesus Christ in age, but Jesus Christ was God from the beginning.

From his fullness we have all received: Of the fullness of “**grace and truth**” which the God – man brought us, we have received the sacraments, and, in the Church, he set up for us.

Grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ: One grace brings another or possibly, the New Covenant which replaced the Old as the following verses clearly states.

No one has ever seen God: He is not visible to earthly human eyes.

The only Son, God, who is at the Father’s side, has revealed him: God is made known to us through Jesus Christ; we can grasp the infinite love and mercy of God, his compassion, his understanding of us weak mortals through Jesus Christ’s; loving dealings with us and his Gospel of mercy. Jesus Christ is God and is in intimate union with the Father “**in the bosom of the Father,**” hence even in his human nature he reflects the divinity.

Application to Life.

The message the Church wishes us to hear from all the Gospel reading on this Solemn Feast read at all Christmas Masses (Vigil, Night, Dawn & Day) is surely this: “**God so loved the world (us) that God gave his only begotten Son for us.**” God gave his divine Son a human nature, to dwell amongst us, to teach us, and finally to die for us. And “**who or what are we that he should be mindful of us?**” Why did God go to such a length for us? This is one of the questions to which we shall never be able to fathom, only when we arrive one day in heaven, may it please God, get the answer.

In the meantime, all we can do is in gratitude and in humble humility accept the fact that God so loved us, that God has done wonderful things for us because of that love. One of these things, the greatest of them, is what all of today’s Gospels put so clearly before us: it is the fact that **Incarnation** which **joined our lowly human nature with the divine nature** in the Person of Jesus Christ (God and man) and thereby made us heirs to heaven.

What our first parents, Adam and Eve sought and grasped lied by the cunning of the devil in the Garden of Eden “**to be like God...**” and sinned, we by the mystery of **Incarnation** and by the life of Jesus Christ in perfect obedience to God the Father, have received “**to be like God**” freely.

How often we have forgotten this privilege that because of our Lord Jesus Christ and our redemption, we are heirs to God’s kingdom, thus sons and daughter of God.

This truly precious gift too often taken for granted or forgotten and instead of being grateful to God we have insulted and offended God by our disobedience to God - sin.

Through our deliberate sinful actions, we are making choices that stating bluntly; **“we are ungrateful of God’s love and worse we reject the infinite love that have redeemed us from eternal death.”**

So often we failed to realize that sin no matter how big or small, when deliberately chosen and committed is offensive to God, for by them we reject the most precious gift God the Father has sent to us, His beloved Son Jesus Christ.

Let us make the resolve to never intentionally and deliberately sin – that is to reject God’s love and mercy. Let us in humble prayer, daily seek God’s grace to be faithful disciples to the end and attain the victory over all that is against God- sin.

Today on this **Solemn Feast of Christmas**, we are filled with gratitude as we open our hearts to receive our Lord Jesus Christ, our Savior.

True, today’s fervor of course, may not always last through all times, we do not know what lies ahead us on this perilous earthly journey – exile, yet our loving God the Father forever saw our weaknesses and left us the means of returning to him anytime we fail, through the ministry of the Church, His Son Jesus Christ established.

Through the Sacrament that give us re-birth in the supernatural grace to be sons and daughters of God, heirs to heaven, the Sacrament that nourish and feed us on this earthly exile with the Body, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ, the Sacrament that bestows pardon and reconciliation with God and one another, the Sacrament that unites us in sacred bond all are found in the Church Jesus established that our salvation be attained and won.

Let not our frailty then or our fickleness frighten us, we are dealing with the God of love and mercy, among whose sons and daughters there is no prodigal son or daughter but is welcome back if he or she takes the simple steps on the return journey.

Christmas promises each one of us that our Savior has come, and redemption is won, we are simply to embrace the Son of God and walk faithfully daily in His footsteps!