



First Sunday after Christmas Sunday, December 30th, 2018

Christmas Flight!



Detention of the Holy Family

A Response of Christ Cathedral, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA, and many other parishes across the country, “locking-up the Holy Family”, to the current forced detention of asylum seekers and separation of 3000 children from their families from the Mexican-US Border.

Today we celebrate the second Sunday of the Christmas season. Luke’s account of Jesus’ birth last week, Christmas Day, was sunny, bright, awash with hope, as he declared the true bringer of peace, Jesus, *not* the Emperor of Rome, Augustus Caesar. Luke’s story on Christmas morning, was what we call a theophany: the ultimate appearance of God to human beings, replete with angels and even compliant, rustic, ruffian shepherds. Little wonder that the Christmas Story has been idealized and romanticized. But now the Christmas crowds have gone and today, we hear Matthew’s rendition of the Christmas Story: and how totally different it is. Consistent with Luke, we hear of God’s coming among us as a vulnerable child, God in diapers, *God with us, God for us, but* what is different, is the already gathering resistance of the political social and religious apparatus, personified in Herod. In Matthew, God comes among us *in a world where children die, where children are killed*. It is a world where the innocents are massacred, where even the Holy Family become asylum seekers, with a “well-founded fear of persecution”, as the Geneva Convention and 1967 Protocol so neatly puts it.

There is a however a silver lining in Matthew’s story, although it may be hard to swallow. It is this: that while the insiders respond with myopic hostility, the outsiders, the pagans, the unbelievers, the wise men, the Zoroastrian philosophers from distant Persia, actually get it right, honouring Him with the much-celebrated gold, frankincense and myrrh: quite an achievement!

OUR GATHERING

Welcome

In the name of God our Father and Mother
 In the name of the Son
 In the name of the Holy Spirit

The Lord be with

And also with you

Christmas Bowl/Act for Peace: A Summary of these past-weeks of giving to the Christmas Bowl

https://www.actforpeace.org.au/www_AFP/media/Christmas-Bowl/CB18%20Resources/CB18-07-First-Sunday-after-Christmas-thank-you.m4v

Let's Sing: Angels from the realms of glory (TiS 309, Iris, French traditional, James Montgomery)

Lighting the Advent and Christ Candles

First Reader

We light the candles of Advent: for hope, for peace, for joy and for love. We finally light the Christ candle, the Christ who evokes all of these dimensions so necessary for living.

Second Reader

Unwelcomed child, seeker of asylum, refugee;
We welcome you

First Reader

Teacher, healer and protagonist;
We welcome you

Second Reader

Lover of the unlovable,
 Toucher of the untouchable,
 Forgiver of the unforgivable;
We welcome you

First Reader:

Loved by women, feared by men,
 Befriended by the weak despised by the strong,
 Deserted by his listeners, betrayed by his friends,
 Bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh;
We welcome you.

The Peace**LET'S HEAR THE WORD****A Way into the Readings: A Story - "Shine" - Being Light**

This morning I would like to use a really simple children's story about Christmas, entitled "Shine" (Karen and Jonathon Langley, Frances Lincoln, 2002). It focuses upon a young child and the call to "shine". In a sense this is what Luke's narrative of the birth of Jesus, that we read on Christmas morning is about. But this child's story serves as a bridge to Matthew's version of the nativity. The punch line of "Shine" is at the very end: *"You shone, Jimmy", said Dad. 'You shone bright enough to light up the darkest of skies'".*

Isaiah 63:7-9 (The Message)

Jenny Huckson

This is what is called by scholars a motivational clause. On the face of it, it appears to be a passage that celebrates a joyous return from exile to the homeland of Jerusalem. But, that is not its purpose. Rather, it precedes a long lament about the failure of God's people but more so, it is about God's silence in the face of all of this. Today's reading is designed to motivate God to return as rescuer. The word for gracious dealings is the Hebrew *chesed* which refers to God's loving loyalty established generations before with Abraham and Moses. The question is: will not you God remain loyal to us and free us from this exile in Babylon?

⁷⁻⁹ I'll make a list of GOD's gracious dealings,
 all the things GOD has done that need praising,
 All the generous bounties of GOD,
 his great goodness to the family of Israel—
 Compassion lavished,
 love extravagant.
 He said, "Without question these are my people,
 children who would never betray me."
 So he became their Saviour.
 In all their troubles,
 he was troubled, too.
 He didn't send someone else to help them.

He did it himself, in person.
 Out of his own love and pity
 he redeemed them.
 He rescued them and carried them along
 for a long, long time.

The word of the Lord
Thanks be to God

Matthew 2:13-23 (The Message)

John Huckson

We read Matthew's rendition of the birth of Jesus. While Luke's version – that we read on Christmas morning – focuses upon the light that has broken into the world, Matthew, focuses upon the challenge ahead, for light has a definite referent – the dark. This darkness is typically expressed in Biblical language, as oppression, the obverse of what the God of Exodus wants in the world. At the heart of this reading are the themes of innocent suffering, encapsulated in Rachel.

¹³ After the scholars were gone, God's angel showed up again in Joseph's dream and commanded, "Get up. Take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay until further notice. Herod is on the hunt for this child, and wants to kill him."

¹⁴⁻¹⁵ Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother under cover of darkness. They were out of town and well on their way by daylight. They lived in Egypt until Herod's death. This Egyptian exile fulfilled what Hosea had preached: "I called my son out of Egypt."

¹⁶⁻¹⁸ Herod, when he realized that the scholars had tricked him, flew into a rage. He commanded the murder of every little boy two years old and under who lived in Bethlehem and its surrounding hills. (He determined that age from information he'd gotten from the scholars.) That's when Jeremiah's sermon was fulfilled:

A sound was heard in Ramah,
 weeping and much lament.
 Rachel weeping for her children,
 Rachel refusing all solace,
 Her children gone,
 dead and buried.

¹⁹⁻²⁰ Later, when Herod died, God's angel appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt: "Up, take the child and his mother and return to Israel. All those out to murder the child are dead."

²¹⁻²³ Joseph obeyed. He got up, took the child and his mother, and re-entered Israel. When he heard, though, that Archelaus had succeeded his father, Herod, as king in Judea, he was afraid to go there. But then Joseph was directed in a dream to go to the hills of Galilee. On arrival, he settled in the village of Nazareth. This move was a fulfillment of the prophetic words, "He shall be called a Nazarene."

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord Christ

Shedding Light in the Darkness: Inua Ellams wrote a book called "Dolphins" tracing the journeys of children crossing the Mediterranean. It is at once both informative and perceptive. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DOcssv-M48>

Hymn: Hark the Herald Angels Sing (TIS 303, Mendelssohn, Charles Wesley)

Some thoughts...

Let's Give: Our Offerings, including those for Act for Peace's Christmas Bowl

Doxology

***Praise God, from whom all blessings flow,
praise him, all creatures here below,
praise him above, ye heavenly host,
praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.***

Prayer of Dedication

Prayers of the People

Lawrence Peak

The one who prays offers the sentence, "God, shed light in the dark" and the people respond, "Make us Christmas people".

Hymn: Unto to us (TiS 293, Puer Nobis Nascitur, Anon, Latin)

We sing the first four verses, receive the blessing and then the final verse)

Blessing

You have come to us as a small child,
but you have brought us the greatest of all gifts,
the gift of love eternal

Caress us with Your tiny hands,
embrace us with Your tiny arms
and pierce our hearts with Your soft, sweet cries.

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153)

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ

Amen

**Closing Verse: Unto to us (TiS 293, Puer Nobis Nascitur, Anon,
Latin), verse 5, “Omega and Alpha.....**

Postlude

Pianist:

Rosemary Osborne