

# Fr. Jeff's Weekly Homily

Christmas 2007  
December 24, 2007

## **READING 1: Isaiah 9:1-6**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing,

## **Psalm 96**

Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice; let the sea and what fills it resound; let the plains be joyful and all that is in them!

## **READING 2: Titus 2: 11-14**

Beloved: The grace of God has appeared, saving all and training us to reject godless ways and worldly desires

## **GOSPEL: Luke 2: 1-14**

And this will be a sign for you: you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

How far do you want God to go to get your attention? Don't answer too quickly.

This is my friend, Honey, the piglet. She is in this cage because she has never been around so many people. She's a little bit afraid. Before Jesus came people had reasons to feel caged. Their sins held them. Oh you know what I am talking about, the envy and the greed, the lies and the disobedience, cheating on a test or in a game, we know about all those sins. They held people caged until Jesus came forgiving us. Let me see if I can get Honey to come out now. She's still a little bit afraid of us. In fact it reminds me that there is another kind of cage we put ourselves into. We don't want to be hurt by the slings and arrows others say about us. You know the name calling, like "porky," or "pinko." There are lots of those things and we build our protective walls and they can turn into cages or prisons. Jesus breaks through and liberates us by reminding us that he came because God radically loves every human being, which means all of us. The fundamental cure for hurt is God's love.

Once there was a man who dared God to speak:

*Burn the bush like you did for Moses, God.*

*And then I will believe.*

*Collapse the walls like you did at Jericho for Joshua, God.*

*And then I will fight.*

*Still the waves like you did on Galilee, God.*

*And I will trust.*

And so the man sat by a bush, near a wall, close to the sea and waited for God to speak. And God heard the man, so God answered. He sent fire, not for a bush, but for a church. He brought down a wall, not of brick, but of sin. He stilled a storm, not of the sea, but of a life. And God waited for the man to respond. And he waited...and he waited...and waited. But because the man was looking at bushes, not hearts; bricks, not lives, seas and not life, he decided that God had done nothing. Finally he looked to God and asked: *Have you lost your power?* And God looked at him and said: *Have you lost your hearing?*

Has God lost his power? Come to the manger and see. The cradle was as common as grass; cribs are a dime a dozen. What made it holy was the One laid in it. It is amazing the lengths God will go to get our attention.

Has God lost his power? Come and see. Come and see the changed lives. See the alcoholic now sober living her 12 steps faithfully, the embittered now joyful, the shamed now forgiven. Come and see the marriages rebuilt; the orphans embraced, the teenagers inspired. Journey to the crowded inner cities of the world and see Mother Teresa's Missionary Sisters of Charity lifting up the poorest, comforting the dying, and reassuring the least of God's little ones. Sneak into the corners of Arabia and find Christians worshiping even under threat of death. Has God lost his power? Are we listening for him as intently as children are listening for flying sleigh bells tonight?

How far do you want God to go to get your attention? Tonight we remember he sent Jesus to get our attention. Accept him as the most important gift in your life and experience on planet earth; the wonder and beauty of God's love on the line for yourself as Abba's loved child. We have no need of cages that imprison us for sin because he forgives; we have no need to allow others to hurt us because his love is healing. God is powerful and God is for us let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice!

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