

Christmas 2008

December 24th, 2008

QUEEN OF PEACE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY
GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA
Rev. Jeff McGowan

1st Reading: Isaiah 9:1-6

The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in a land of gloom a light has shown.

Psalm 96

Today is born our Savior; Christ the Lord!

2nd Reading: Titus 2:11-14

Beloved: The grace of God has appeared, saving all

Gospel: Luke 2:1-14

You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing

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This is a special night...Santa is coming and bringing toys to children who behave well in church!

But I want to speak about something even more spectacular: the rebirth of our Savior Jesus Christ in our hearts and minds and the manger. At Christmas, the veil parts between the two worlds we contain in our own imperfect lives. Those two worlds are our inner desire for a more divine destiny and the hard reality of our present circumstances.

On this glorious evening, the baby begs the question: who do you say that I am? I'll give you a hint: this baby is the same yesterday, today and forever. You can count on that!

Not so our present circumstances. It's been a rough year to put it mildly. But all that we've lost was not enough to make us happy when we had it.

This baby transforms us by not threatening us. This baby is an invitation that draws out the best in us. This baby heals us. This baby delights in every smile. This baby shimmers with divinity. We ask: "Are we all, unknowingly, shimmering with the beauty of God like this baby in the manger?"

A dad was taking his turn wrapping presents. His seven year old was looking for something to do. The dad told him he could help by polishing dad's shoes for church. So the boy took on the project, settled down and polished his

dad's shoes. Dad was so pleased he handed his son five dollars. A few hours later as dad was dressing for four o'clock Mass his toe scrunched up against something in his shoe. He pulled out a piece of paper and opened it to find the five dollar bill and a note that said, "Daddy, I did it for love!"

Yes, God's answer is yes, you really are shimmering with the beauty of God like this baby in the manger. Because you are loved... God did this for love.... Good news, huh?

Here's some more good news! Catholic Charities had one of the most demanding years ever this Christmas. There were 94 families to adopt. Of the 94 families, Queen of Peace parishioners adopted more than 40%, 39 families. The St. Francis Catholic High School basketball team donated bicycles for all these kids. In addition, toys donated by Queen of Peace parishioners and others allowed Catholic Charities to provide gifts for an additional 300+ children. Yesterday, food from our parishioners helped provide Christmas dinner for 80 families. In addition to the Catholic Charities families, Queen of Peace also adopted 15 elder care couples and 25 "Peaceful Path," women (some with children).

We're glad our visitors are here because I'd like to invite anyone new to Gainesville and anyone looking for a church community to consider joining us on this great adventure in faith and love. I hope you'll enjoy the video. I pray that you will be astonished by this baby in the manger and find your new year deeply transformed by His love.