

Christmas 2009 [c]

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

1ST READING: 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 shown.. for a child is born to us, a son is given to us, upon his shoulder all dominion rests.

PSALM 96

Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.

2ND READING: TITUS 2: 11-14

The grace of God has appeared, saving all...

GOSPEL: LUKE 2: 1-14

You have nothing to fear!

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Adult Masses: 6:30 & Midnight

Are the joy and peace of Christmas only the expression of a mood in which we dreamily take refuge for a few hours of our year?

A five year old boy named Patrick asked his dad, "how come I have never seen you cry?" It was one of those five year old, no warning, no preamble, questions that catch grown-ups off guard. What could dad say? Would the old adage: "Big boys don't cry" be enough? He didn't want to raise his son that way. The dad realized this question went right to his heart. Dad mumbled something about crying when his son wasn't around, but dad started thinking about his life. Maybe it is cultural, he thought, guys traveling through the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune with a stiff upper lip, calm on the outside but secretly dying within. According to the news, the number of men being diagnosed with depression today is skyrocketing. In the past, it seems, men self medicated with alcohol or drugs, or work or the pursuit of pleasure or possessions or just spending afternoons and evenings sitting mindlessly in front of one televised sports event or another. But the distractions do not really relieve the stress.

Christmas is more than a bit of cheerful mood. Christmas is forever. Christmas is reality. The important figure in this night is the child—the one child—the Son of God—and his birth. Christmas means that he has come. He is there in the world. And therefore everything is different than we imagined it to be. God does more than we dare to ask. God becomes our brother and our best friend. Ever since he became our brother he is as near to us as ourselves. He says to us tonight: I am there. I am with you. I am your life. I am your time; I am with you in your daily routine. I am your joy.

Do not be afraid to be happy, Jesus says, for ever since I cried for you, joy is the standard of living that is really more suitable than the anxiety and grief of those who have no hope. If we judge the future dependent only on ourself, we cannot be pessimistic enough. But if we say, IT IS CHRISTMAS—in faith that is determined, sober, and above all courageous—then we mean that an event came bursting into the world and into our life, an event that changed all that we call the world and our life. He has made the night bright. He changes our entire outlook on life. So it is realistic to say Christmas is forever.

The little boy, Patrick, who asked his dad about crying, well, he enjoyed singing and had a great voice for a five year old. He was in the children's choir and the choir director asked Patrick to sing a verse of *Silent Night* as a solo. Dad, thought, Patrick's first solo and began to imagine all that could go wrong for his little boy. But Patrick wasn't scared. His solo came after Communion. The church was quiet; everyone thinking their own private thoughts. Then he sang. He was dressed in white and wore a pair of angels wings and he sang as if he had done this forever. Patrick hit every note, slowly, confidently and for those few moments as his five year old voice washed over the people, he seemed a true angel, a bestower of Christmas miracles. At the sound of his son, dad's eyes washed over with tears. Others wept too. After the Mass, dad found Patrick and knelt down to his level. "Patrick, do you remember when you asked me why you had never seen me cry?" He nodded. "Well, I am crying now, aren't I?" He nodded again. "Why are you crying, daddy?" "Your singing was so beautiful, it made me cry."

Patrick flew into his dad's arms. Dad cried all the more. "Sometimes," his son said into his shoulder, "life is just so beautiful you have to cry."

It is Christmas.

Light the candles, they have more right to exist than all the darkness.

It is Christmas.

Our brother is with us.

Christmas lasts forever.

You don't have to be afraid to be happy.