

## Homily 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent-December 18, 2022

Good morning everyone. As many of you know. Cindy and I went on a vacation about three weeks ago. But as soon as we reached our destination, we both came down with colds; the first time we have been sick in three years-all through the pandemic we were fine. And now I have a constant dripping in my throat. So please forgive the constant cough. It's kind of annoying to me.

Amidst all the **activities** that **swirl around** these final days before Christmas, the Church wants to make sure that we don't forget the **real meaning** of this great Christian holiday.

Christmas is the anniversary of the **birth of Jesus Christ**, the day the Church has chosen to celebrate the "**Mass**" of "**Christ's**" birth - **Christ-Mass**.

The **exchange of gifts** that we are getting ready for, the time that we will be spending with **family and friends** - these are all good things, **good ways to celebrate our love for each other!**

Exchanging gifts reminds us that on Christmas, God gave us His **greatest gift ever**, our **Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ**.

Spending time with family members reminds us that the **result** of that gift from God, was our **salvation**, which consists in our **adoption into His family**. We received this gift from God through His love and grace at our baptisms. This is the **heart** of what Christmas is all about.

But it is not **just** something that happened in the **past**.

Through the **Church** and the **Sacraments**, Christ has wanted to **stay with** his newly adopted family **throughout all of history**.

In a sense, **every Mass** is a **new Bethlehem**, a new **coming of Christ** among us.

And every day he **renews his invitation to us**, the invitation he brought when **He** arrived on earth on that first Christmas night two thousand years ago.

**What is that invitation?**

St Paul described it well in the Second Reading.

He wrote that a **Christian** is someone who is "**called to belong to Jesus Christ**", One who is "**called to be holy**", called to be "**set apart**"!

Christ **comes** to us at Christmas, but he doesn't come **passively** - he comes to **save** us all, to **call** us out of a **self-centered** life and into a **Christ-centered** life.

That's what it means to "**belong to Jesus Christ**" and "**to be holy.**" And that's exactly what **all** of us are called to be!

Living a **Christ-centered** life means dedicating ourselves to **Christ's priorities** - and His highest priority is the **building up His Kingdom, the Church.**

In a sense, we could say that Christ has chosen to **limit his omnipotence** in order to **involve** us in **His work of salvation.** He wants to give us an **active role** in the building up His Kingdom.

This is why he **became human** that Christmas Day long ago - because He wanted **us** to be able to **become sons and daughters of God the Father;** to be His brothers and sisters and His **co-workers in the Kingdom of God.**

He came to share in our **humanity,** so that we could share in His **divinity.**

This very act is **symbolized** in every Mass.

At Mass, during the **offering** of the bread and wine, the Deacon or the Priest pours a **few drops of water** into the **chalice of wine,** and he says the words, "**By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to**

**share in the divinity of Christ who has humbled himself to share in our humanity.” At that time, we become truly “one” with Him!**

Those few drops of water get **mix with the wine**, and then together, with the words of **consecration**, they are **transubstantiated** into the **blood of Christ**.

The **water** is like our **human nature**, and the **wine** is like His **divine nature**.

The water is **taken up into** the wine, just as, through Christ's grace and incarnation, our human nature is **taken up into God**. Christ came from **heaven** to announce this **Good News** to us, to invite us to **follow** Him to the truly abundant life in Him!

And twenty centuries later, we can **still hear** that invitation because His followers throughout the years have continued to **pass that Good News on** to every generation.

Now it's **our turn**. We **know** Christ. We know the **true meaning** of Christmas.

But all around us there are people who **don't know** Christ or may have **given up** on Him.

All around us there are people who may be celebrating Christmas on the **outside**, but on the inside they are in misery and pain. Their lives are **falling apart**, and they don't know where to turn.

We **do** know where to turn. Our lives aren't **perfect** by any means, but we have **heard the call** of Christ; we hear **His voice**, and we follow Him. We have set out on the **path** that leads to **lasting peace**.

We have **hope**; we have **access** to the **spiritual blessing** of the **Eucharist** and the spiritual **healing** of **confession**. All of this gives us the **strength to endure**, in difficult times.

It guarantees that even in the **darkest days of winter**, at least a few **Christmas lights** are always shining in the **depths of our hearts**.

All of this we have because someone, at some point, took the trouble to **tell us about Jesus Christ**, to set a **Christ-like example** for us to follow. Encouraging us to always keep our eyes on Jesus!

In these beautiful days ahead of us, let's **keep our eyes open** for those people who need someone to **tell them**, about Jesus Christ. Let's share with them the love of Christ and let's **pass on the His Good News**.

That's the best possible **present** we can give to anyone on Jesus' birthday.