

+ J. M. J.

According to the United States Naval Observatory today we will have one more minute of twilight than we had for the past seven days. Gradually the days will be getting longer until we reach the middle of summer. The glory of the Lord shone around shepherds in the fields. A star lights the way for magi from the east to find the child. It was said that at the moment Jesus was born the dwelling was filled with a light brighter than the sun. The entire cosmos acknowledges that God has taken flesh, and our Savior has come into the world. Isaiah's prophesy comes true in physical manifestations in nature. **"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone."**

Imagine for a moment you're there on that morning in Bethlehem. It is past midnight and quite cool. Inside the cave you are greeted by St. Joseph. Also there are their donkey and ox. Next you see a beautiful, young Mother of God holding her newborn son wrapped in swaddling clothes. As you gaze on the Babe his eyes meet yours. Those little eyes penetrate your whole being. This is the God who created the universe. He created your very soul. At this instant he though a baby holds all the stars and planets in motion. He sustains all the creatures and holds them in being. As he continues to look into your very soul you realize he knows all of your struggles for the past year. He knows your deepest secrets, your fears, and your frustrations. He came precisely to free you from all your burdens and in this loving look he invites you to give all of your problems to him. This baby Jesus came for you.

On this night all of history changed. For two thousand years Christians have given their entire lives for this little baby. Some have sold all their possessions to follow him. Some give up their families and even go to faraway lands to tell others about this baby. Some have witnessed their faith to the point of giving their own life. We are called to change our lives in a radical way because of what happened on Christmas. We hear the words of St. Paul to Titus, but they are also to us. **"Reject godless ways and worldly desires."** Although the world physically witnessed God coming into it, God himself comes in

poverty. He is a mere baby. His parents are so poor they have nowhere to stay and they laid him in a manger. We then his followers are called not to get caught up in the material things of this world but to realize those things will be left behind. We are to live **“temperately, justly, and devoutly.”** By the virtue of temperance we seek not merely to satisfy our passions but to live in moderation so through the use of our reason we understand that it is not possessions or things that make us happy but our relationships and the relationship we seek at our core is a relationship with our God. By justice we give to others what they have a right to which is food, clothing, and shelter to those who for whatever reason cannot obtain these things on their own. In justice too we give God the worship he deserves, acknowledging his greatness. We mere creatures can hardly give God anything, but together we are united through this baby, God who took on flesh, so we worship together on every Sunday. We can't worship without him. We can't worship without our brothers and sisters whom we are connected to in Christ, by our baptism. Finally we live devoutly. Our whole life has to be in service of this Babe. Unfortunately many Christians act no differently than anyone else in the world. We can't just give a couple of hours per year. Everything we do should be a result of our prayer life and relationship with Jesus. If we do not that life of Jesus is not truly within us. How do we plan to rise from the dead when we die? We don't have that power. Only Jesus gives it to us when we accept his whole life.

Back to the cave. Tradition tell us that those who visited the holy family Mary allowed to hold little Jesus. This night Mary offers her son and our savior to you. Yes, take the baby Jesus, your God in your arms. This is the Jesus that we receive in the Eucharist. Hold Jesus in your arms. Allow the love of God to permeate your entire being. Open yourself to the message and the love that baby Jesus gives you tonight. Then, give everything; surrender your entire self to this baby.

Merry Christmas!