

Christmas - B  
Isaiah 9:1-6;  
Titus 2:11-14 ;  
Luke 2:1-14  
Little Flower - 12/25/17

My Brothers and Sisters,

The parish staff and I want to wish all of you a most blessed and joyful Christmas. In a special way, we want to welcome all of our visitors, especially those who are returning home to Little Flower to celebrate this Christmas Liturgy with us tonight.

Tonight we celebrate the birth of Jesus. In tonight's Gospel, Luke is careful to make it clear that the birth of Jesus was an historical event. It locates the birth of Jesus in time and place and within a particular people and family. He tells us that it took place when Caesar Augustus was emperor and Quirinius was governor of Syria. It took place in Bethlehem of Judea, the city of David. We are told that Joseph was of the house and family of David.

However, Jesus' birth was more than an historical event. Jesus' birth was a true miracle. When the Angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she was to be the mother of Jesus, who would be the Son of God and Messiah, Mary asked how this could be since she was a virgin. The Angel Gabriel responded, "*The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God*" [Lk. 1:35]. The miracle of Christmas is that the Son of God became human, was born on Christmas, lived among us as one of us, died for us, and rose on the third day.

The birth of Jesus challenges us to reflect on our faith in Jesus. Do we really believe he was and is the Son of God, or do we believe that he was just an extraordinary human being? If we believe he was the Son of God made human, then we believe that the miracle of Christmas continues whenever Jesus is made present among us.

The miracle of Christmas continues in every Eucharist. As Catholic Christians, we believe that every time we celebrate Eucharist, Jesus is made really present in the Eucharist. In the Eucharistic Prayer, we pray that the Holy Spirit, the same Spirit who came upon Mary, will sanctify our gifts of bread and wine so that they may become the Body and Blood of Christ.

The miracle of Christmas continues whenever the Scriptures are proclaimed or read. Because we believe that the Scriptures are the living Word of God, we believe that Jesus, the Word of God, is present whenever they are proclaimed or read.

Finally, the miracle of Christmas continues in the Spirit of Jesus living within and among us. At the Last Supper, on the night before he died, Jesus promised to send his Holy Spirit to be with us always, a promise he fulfilled on Pentecost. Jesus is made flesh wherever and whenever there is authentic love given or received. For example, the gifts we give and the gifts we receive at Christmas are embodiments of our love for family and friends, but they also embody Jesus' love for us. Jesus is made flesh wherever and whenever two or three strive to live Christian lives in community or family. Finally, Jesus is made flesh in us wherever and whenever we become his hands and feet serving the needs of the neediest among us.

My brothers and sisters, the miracle of Christmas was not a one-time event or moment. The miracle of Christmas recurs in our midst when we celebrate Eucharist, when we proclaim the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, and when we love and serve one another.

Oh, what a gift,  
What a wonderful gift;  
Who can tell the wonders of the Lord?  
Let us open our eyes, our ears, and our hearts;  
It is Christ the Lord; it is he!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Pat Uhl & Michael Gilligan, "Canticle of the Gift," *The Johannine Hymnal*, (Oak Park, Illinois: American Catholic Press, 1970).