

For to Us a Child is Born
December 24, 2021, The Nativity of the Lord (Mass During The Night)
Gospel of Luke 2:15-20
Fr. John

Christmas belongs to children and to the child in all of us. We adults must learn from the delight of our children. The biblical readings, however, do not scatter toys around a Christmas tree nor are they composed of fairy tales. If Christmas speaks to the child in all of us, it is not because the day and the feast are childish, but because they are close, as children are, to the wellspring of life. We come face to face with what is most essential, most beautiful, and most worthy of our dedication. Perhaps that's the point Jesus was making when he said: 'Unless you become as little children, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven'.

The birth of a new baby in a family is not a childish matter. The impact of that moment will be felt for all eternity by each member of the family. Not only will the child thoroughly influence its parents, brothers, and sisters by its character and temperament, its needs and desires, its difficulties and accomplishments, but the child itself will absorb the virtues and prejudices, the talents and the wisdom, the spirit and tradition of its family ancestors. In that way, as we have heard many times - **every child matters**.

In tonight's first reading, the prophet, Isaiah, speaks about a people who walked in darkness - dwelling in a land of gloom. In his day, that darkness and gloom were the result a good part of the land of Israel being subjugated by a foreign power and many of its people taken away into exile. In our own time, it is not a foreign power but rather a virus that has exiled many of us from our normal way of life and placed many of us in isolation from one another. And yet in the midst of all that, the birth of a child, radiating new life, innocence, and hope conveys a sense of joy and peace. It is a reminder that God has not forgotten us in our anguish and has chosen to enter our human experience as a newborn baby, who would eventually teach us, as the letter to Titus says, to live temperately, justly, and devoutly.

It is not a coincidence that the early Christians placed their celebration of the saviour's birth close to the winter solstice - the day of the shortest amount of sunlight in the year. Even the ancients knew that despite the predominance of darkness, the return of the light was already beginning. It is almost unnoticeable at first, like the birth of a child in world rooted in adult power and international politics.

I'm not sure exactly where we are in the grand scheme of things, in awakening to God's plan. Like a Saskatchewan winter, the cold and darkness take their time in going away. St. Paul said that all of creation is groaning in the act of giving birth. If that is true then we are still very much located in the darkness of the birth canal. And yet, we live in the hope that birth will take place and in fact, already **has** taken place.

The helplessness and fragility of a baby, like the weak rays of a winter's sun may not seem to promise much at first. But we, the people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light dawning. It brings out the child in all of us and makes us want to sing and shout in the words of the Psalm: Let the heavens be glad and the earth rejoice - tell his glory among the nations, among all peoples, His wondrous deeds!