

This Month's Liturgy; January 2018

We begin the Calendar Year with great Christmastide Feasts – Mary, Mother of God, the Epiphany (which this year is kept on the Sunday, 7th January) and then The Baptism of the Lord. These Feasts remind us that the Christmas Season is exactly that – a period of time, not just a one-day wonder ! Just as the weeks of Advent have helped us prepare for the Coming of the Lord at the end of Time (the Parousia, the theme of the first three weeks of Advent) and then to celebrate the coming of the Lord in the history of the People of Israel and of the world (the season of the seventeenth of December through until Christmas day itself), so these weeks after Christmas Day enable us to reflect upon the wonder of the star which we have seen, the song of 'Glory to God in the highest' which we have heard, and the child whom we too have embraced and in whose birth we are made glad.

We also need to respond to that most fundamental of all questions – ' and what difference does it make.....? '.

Fundamentally we can with surety reply ' all the difference in the world' – this is also what we sing on the night of the Easter Vigil in the Exultet,

' What good would life have been to us, had Christ not come as our Redeemer? '.

The birth of Jesus, his life and teaching, his death and resurrection – all these events are caught up in that one wondrous proclamation

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that whoever believes in Him may not perish but have eternal life . (John 3:16)

The gift who is the Word made Flesh transforms our lives into lives which look towards God to find their ultimate purpose and dignity and towards the world to find that place where the proclamation of the love of God must be translated into acts and works of charity and kindness. Why, we may ask, what is the reason for this hope and purpose for our daily living , faithful to the example and command of the Lord Jesus? Because we acknowledge in the words of Pope Leo the Great which we read on Christmas Night in the Office of Readings a fundamental truth which makes of each one of us a bearer of God's goodness and God's Word to others;

O Christian, be aware of your nobility ! It is God's own life that you share....

Advent and Christmastide have invited us to be a people of HOPE and of VISION. These attitudes for life are closely linked to the Feasts we have celebrated over these last days; may we bear the fruit of these virtues in our daily living in the weeks and months which lie ahead of us in this new Year of the Lord , 2018.

Father Philip.