

## Christmas - 2018 - Year C - Mass During the Night

Depending upon your personal tastes, your position in history (that's a euphemism for age), and your electronic devices, you have probably listened to Mannheim Steamroller, the Trans Siberian Orchestra, St. John's College Choir, Il Divo, the Priests, the Vienna Pops, the Canadian Brass, Pavarotti, Céline Dion, Alvin and the Chipmonks, the odd group known as Go Fish, Bing Crosby, Justin Bieber, Gloria Estefan, Garth Brooks, Carrie Underwood, Snoopy Doggy Dogg, Boyz II Men.....the list is borderline endless..But you get the picture, everyone sings about Christmas. Even XM Radio has seven stations dedicated to what they call Holiday Music....even though most of the music is Christmas Music.

Why do we spend so much energy singing and composing music about Christmas? Why do we cook so much for Christmas? Why do we eat so much for Christmas? Why do we prepare so much for Christmas? No matter how politically correct secular society wants us to be, this is not a holiday. It is Christmas.

The birth of Jesus causes people to sing, to celebrate, to gather, to give thanks, and, hopefully, to pray. Multiple reasons exist for us to rejoice. We may not be able to find them around us. After all, we are still engaged in war, thousands still suffer the results of natural disasters, violence strikes when we least expect it, the fiscal cliff is somewhere out there waiting for us to topple, people experience difficulties in paying fuel bills, and other turmoils come and go.

Likewise, if we look around us we might find some reasons for joy. We are here, we are safe, we look forward to a beautiful Christmas celebration whatever shape that may take. However, when we look for joy, satisfaction, and happiness solely among ourselves, we know deep down that those feelings can quickly pass and transform into something different.

So, where do we find "joy to the world," "heaven and earth singing," "God bless ye merry gentlemen," "all is calm and all is bright," and "may your days be merry and bright?" The answer is a babe crying in a crib, adored by shepherds and angels, and later by Magi. Year after year, month after month, day after day we look in the wrong places for answers that can only be provided by faith. Yet, on this one day of the year we sing words of joy about a Savior who is born. We rejoice because God became one of us so that we could become like him. A simple formula leading to happiness and peace, but a formula that we often reject because, in its simplicity, it

takes effort, seems to lack expediency, and does not produce an immediate result.

Look to the scripture readings. “people who walked in darkness have seen a great light,” “You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing,” “the grace of God has appeared, saving all, and training us to reject the godless ways and worldly desires,” “good news of great joy,” and, finally, “peace to those on whom his favor rests.”

Faithful discipleship of Jesus brings fulfillment in this life and in the life to come. There are four simple keys to be a faithful, disciple of Jesus, a dynamic Catholic. They are: prayer, study, generosity, and evangelization. These four keys will transform the practitioners as well as those around them. Daily prayer and especially the weekly prayer of the Eucharist are essential to be a dynamic Catholic. If we do not speak to God and let God speak to us, we are left to our own resources...I find that very scary. Study, learning more about our faith, brings substance to our faith and will help us pray better. Generosity of time and talent demonstrates our commitment to the values preached by Jesus. Evangelization means that we want to share our faith with others without hesitation. Prayer, study, generosity, and evangelization move us from staring at the Christmas crib to staring at ourselves, others, and our God to discover how to make the Christmas message a daily message.

Our Catholic faith is a precious heritage, one that we manage, we treasure, but one that we need to work at.

Il Divo in their song “Rejoice” says it very well: “Where did I misplace my faith? Where did I set it down? Which one, the day that I forgot what this was all about. And I came so close to throwing it all away, But I’m taking it back again. So come and rejoice, come and rejoice. What was lost, is found.”

So, Christmas is a time for all of us, no matter how strong or how weak we are in our practice of the faith, to find Christmas in the crib, to make sure that we do not throw it all away, that we intensify our fervor. Hopefully, the worship, the praise, the good will, and the generosity of Christmas can extend beyond this season. May we be dynamic Catholics as we come to worship and praise the Lord. O come, let us adore Him.