

DECEMBER 25, 2017 | MASS DURING THE DAY

Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord (Christmas)

READING 1 IS 52:7-10

RESPONSORIAL PSALM PS 98:1, 2-3, 3-4, 5-6.

R. (3c) **All the ends of the earth have seen the saving power of God.**

READING 2 HEB 1:1-6

GOSPEL JN 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God. And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. John testified to him and cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'" From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him.

Christmas 2017 Homily B

As a small boy, it was our family tradition on Christmas Eve to “go over the river and through the woods to Grandmother’s house.” I’m sure that we did go over several rivers, and certainly through the woods, but it was certainly not in the horse-drawn sleigh of a Currier and Ives print. Rather, we’d take Dad’s 1967 Chevy Camaro and drive the 50 or so miles from Howell MI in the Detroit suburbs into a closer suburb, Royal Oak, where my grandmother lived on North Wilson Ave. For a small boy and his brother and sister, it was almost like going to heaven. We would be met by my grandmother at her “back door,” entering the small house on the flight of stairs between the basement and the first floor. After greetings, we’d be led through the kitchen, overflowing with all kinds of goodies—Christmas cookies, baked breads, cinnamon rolls, just to start. There was always a baked ham, baked potatoes, green bean casserole, cranberry sauce, on and on it went.

But, we kids knew there was even a more sumptuous feast to come. We'd go right to my grandma's living room, on the front side of the house, where we'd go to heaven itself! A magnificently trimmed Christmas tree dominated the room, but of most importance to us were the literal heaps of presents under, around, and spreading out from the tree! We kids would try to look like we were not "scoping" out the presents, as we casually made passes by the piles. I recall the amazement of thinking, "Wow, that one's for Scott." "That one's for Scott too!" Before the feast of presents, however, we'd go back to my Grandma's small kitchen and enjoy the feast she'd prepared there. I recall her joy at having her family around—as a small boy, I could not, of course, think about how she felt, a recent widow, to have her son, my father, and the grandchildren in the house. I don't recall any sense of her sorrow at her loss, but a small child would not be attune to such things. After we had devoured everything we could, we soon began another feeding frenzy, this time with presents! It was sheer delight—and over all too quickly. I'd remember mom and dad reacting nervously when all us kids would yell out, "Is that all?" not demanding more, but hardly believing that all the ecstasy was over! Grandma would smile with delight and say, "yes, that's everything!"

"Is that all?" In the calm of Christmas morning, after all the trips to the Mall and Walmart are done, all the gifts wrapped carefully and opened sometimes feverously, all the preparations are finishes, all the travels at least complete to get us to our destinations, we can finally take a breath and say, "Is that all?" Then, we come here, and see, however lovely are the gatherings, however heartfelt the expressions of love offered, and yes, however difficult the season, mourning loved ones, and the sometimes inevitable tensions that arise when "we're all back together," maybe too much together; that, with faith, "no, there is much more! Of course, we kids knew instinctively that gifts, however lovely, left us still wanting more.

So we come to church, to receive the one gift that does not leave us wanting more, the very presence of the Almighty God, the very one alone who can fill the "God-sized hole" in our hearts. For this is how we were made: As St. Augustine famously said, "our hearts are restless, until they rest in Thee, O Lord." So, after all the excitement, if you feel a letdown, or a sense that you and others are still wanting—that's normal, that's how you were created!

So, now, after much is finished, we come to the one who has come to us, that we might be filled and satisfied eternally—God with us, Jesus. He is all for which we were created. He is all we need. And—God news, we don't have to chase around to find him—He comes to us—right here at this altar, today and all through the year. "And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory."

We have seen his glory, and still see his glory, the glory that alone fills the desires of every human heart—all we need.