

Have you ever noticed the flow of the beginning of tonight's Gospel?

It begins with the Emperor of all the world! Caesar Augustus!

It tells us that all THE WORLD SHOULD REGISTER!

The reason why people should register is to collect more taxes to run the Roman Empire.

Then we move from great emperor and the capital City of Rome to Syria a far off province of Rome and its governor, Quirinius. Has anyone here ever heard of Quirinius? No, and you never will. Syria is just a speck on the map of the great Roman Empire.

Then it mentions a person named Joseph, a carpenter, from the town (a really a dinky village) named Nazareth, so small that the gospel writer has to tell you that it is located in the region of Galilee. Joseph is with Mary to whom he was engaged and who is with child. They are traveling to the city of David (Bethlehem) to register because that is where Joseph's family is from.

When they get to Bethlehem, they end up staying in a stable overnight because there was no place for them in an inn.

The child was born, lovingly wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, a feeding trough for animals.

This Christmas scene is so far away from the center of power, Not the palaces of Rome, not the mansions of Washington, but in a stable in Bethlehem.

Well things have not changed much in 2,000 years. What catches national headlines today: Tax Bills in congress.

And what is a main international concern. Today we have refugees everywhere with no place to lay their heads. There are more refugees and immigrants from Syria and Africa and Central America today than at any other time in world history.

Yet in all the places God could have chosen to send his son, God had him born caught up in a world busy about collecting taxes and being a member of a family seeking a safe place for their about-to-be-born child.

But why? There must be a reason?

Let's return to the Gospel story. I believe that the shepherds can help us out

We hear that there were shepherds in the field watching their flock by night. Angels appear and speak to them.

An aside: Angels are used in scripture to express the presence of God without God being actually having to be present. The shepherds are frightened! In the presence of our great God would we not be a little afraid?

The angel tells them, “Do not be afraid; I bring you good news of Great joy for ALL the people.

- **Not just the 1% of rich people getting the biggest tax break.**
- **Not just for the people living in one of the richest countries of the world.**
- **Not just for those who have good health**
- **Not just for the college educated**
- **Not just for those who are born a certain skin color or a certain gender**

But I bring good news for ALL THE PEOPLE!

Oh yes, my brothers and sisters.

Here we have a different kind of King; a different kind of Kingdom!

Who is born in a stable,

a feeding trough,

to be food, ---

to be nourishment for all the people.

Well shepherds, how are you doing tonight!?

Yes, in the midst of our darkness, a light has shown.

With the shepherds we come and adore.

But then, the news is for ALL the people!

But how do we share the light?

How do we witness;

- **St Vincent de Paul:**
 - **Eighteen tables and window ledges overflowing with gifts for children in our community.**
- **Winter coat for man of out prison**
- **Two men SEEKERS coming to the community, We are not just an institution we come to and drop in a few coins in occasionally. We are a faith-family possessing a great treasure. We see that treasure expressed at the greeting of peace. We explode! Glory to God in the highest!**
- **But in our secular world, we need to be very creative, be aware, of how we best share that Good News.**
- **For instance, I received word from my niece that her husband died this past week after a long battle with cancer. It was both their second marriages. Some of the adult children do not believe in God and want no mention of God in the funeral**

service. Now there is a challenge How do you let your light of faith shine in that setting?

- Yet every once in a while we find our little light of faith which the Lord has shared with us catches on. We are like those shepherds who, for some unknown reason, have been chosen to share the Good news of his birth in our midst. And because of a phone call I received yesterday, I know this is true.
- I received a call from a young man name Jon, calling from Spain
 - I believe he is in his late twenties. He grew up in our community.
 - He comes from a troubled family background
 - Father died
 - He has been through some bad love relationships as a young adult
 - His relationship with God has changed over the years: Guilt, no relationship, growing conversation, now committed to God and his Catholic experience of God.
 - I had not talked with him in years and was not that overly-close with him as he grew up in our community. But he felt impelled on Christmas eve to call and thank me and this faith community for our gift to him as we was on his way to

a Christmas dinner. He has grown in his faith and considers it one of the best gifts he has ever received.

(Pause)

Well shepherds: in the midst of the tax debate and rush of refugees of our day, the Good news of Christ's birth is still being announced and celebrated in an out-of-the-way place in Northwest Detroit. It is STILL good news for ALL GOD'S PEOPLE. May we, the shepherds of our day, each in our own humble way, share our great gift of the good news with all we meet this Christmas season.