Opinion
Spirituality



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February 6, 2020

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This may seem confusing, what we're doing today, because we've already have had three weeks of what we call ordinary time, the time of the year when we follow the life of Jesus, his public life as an adult. Now suddenly we're back to 40 days after Jesus is born.

But there's good reason for this, because Jesus came into the world to change everything, to make our world and our human family a world where there is the reign of God, where there is peace, where people love one another. Jesus came to show us the way to do that.

Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

February 2, 2020

Malachi 3:1-4

Psalms 24

Hebrews 2:14-18

Luke 2:22-40

Yet we fail, I think, to appreciate fully who Jesus is and why it's so important to listen to him and to follow his way. Most people in the world, of course, don't really know who Jesus is. He's the Son of God. As we come to know that and really take it in with conviction, it can change our whole attitude toward our life, toward our family, our whole attitude about everything — the Son of God as well as the Son of Mary.

We say so easily, "Yes, I believe Jesus is God," but do you really act on that belief by listening to him deeply and trying faithfully to follow what he teaches?

There were many ways in which around Christmas we tried to take in that truth that Jesus is the Son of God. On Christmas day, we read the beginning of John's Gospel where he writes, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... and the Word became flesh."

St. Paul later on writes about Jesus, "Though he was God and had equality with God, Jesus chose not to maintain that equality with God, but rather emptied himself to take on a human nature, to become one of us in every way except sin. ... Therefore, Jesus was raised up to be Son of God in power."

Jesus is one of us, a member of our human family, but he is also the Son of God. So that should make a difference in how we listen each week to the Gospel and how we watch in our imagination how Jesus acted.

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Just a Sunday ago, Jesus called us to be disciples. You remember how the first disciples left their nets, left their regular work and they followed him. They began to build a whole community of followers of Jesus who listened to him, began to try to act according to his ways, to try to carry out his work, to make the reign of God happen in this world.

That's what each one of us is called to do if we follow Jesus. We have to live differently from many of those around us.

Contrary to some of the cultural things that are happening in our country and in the world, we have to be different, because Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor (woe to the rich). ... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice. ... Blessed are those who work for peace."

Also, Jesus tells us, "When I was hungry, you gave me food to eat. When I was naked, you clothed me. When I was thirsty, you gave me drink. When I was homeless, you took me in." Jesus certainly never expected his followers would build a wall to keep people out.

There are so many ways when we look around us, I think, that we begin to understand we haven't really listened deeply or followed carefully to what Jesus teaches us week after week after week.

Maybe that's why there's kind of this pause in ordinary time and we go back to the reality of Christmas, where we try to deeply accept the truth that Jesus is the Son of

Mary, yes, part of our human family, yes, but also Son of God. We need to listen to him to hear what he says, act according to his ways and we can change our world.

At one point in his life, I'm sure you recall, Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." He dissipates the darkness, drives it away, and brings light, goodness and love. That's what he calls us to do. That's why we took that lighted candle today, just as we had held up for us at our baptisms, so that we could be the light of the world by following Jesus.

As we go back to our ordinary time next Sunday, I hope that all of us will be prepared to listen deeply because Jesus will be teaching us his way. He will be trying to guide us into peace and love and goodness and joy, trying to help us to carry on his work of transforming our world into the reign of God, a time of fullness of peace and love and life for every person. I hope each of us remembers this symbolism that we've carried out today and make it more than a symbol, that each one of us will truly be a light according to the way of Jesus wherever we go.

Editor's note: *This homily was given Feb. 2 at St. Ambrose Church, Grosse Pointe Park, Michigan. The transcripts of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton's homilies are posted weekly to NCRonline.org. Sign up here to receive an email alert when the latest homily is posted.*