Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





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“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests” (Luke 2:14).

Christmas Eve

Because Christmas happens on a Saturday this year, the Lectionary lays out its treasures in quick succession beginning on Friday, December 24. The Mass of the day has the Canticle of Zechariah and then for the vigil Matthew’s genealogy. Most churches will celebrate their main liturgy Friday evening using the majestic birth announcement from Isaiah 9:1-6 and the familiar Gospel from Luke 2:1-14 about the birth of Jesus and the angel’s message to the shepherds. A Mass at dawn on Saturday, December 25, continues Luke’s story of the shepherds arriving at the manger (2:15-20), and finally, for the Mass of Christmas Day, the prologue from John 1:1-18

We then catch our breath and celebrate the Holy Family on Sunday, December 26. With six services total for the weekend, not until the Triduum leading up to Easter will Catholics have the opportunity to immerse themselves in so much scripture and liturgy focused on the central beliefs of our faith. Families with crib sets will need to wait until after New Year’s Day to celebrate the Magi on the Feast of Epiphany, January 2, before putting them away until December of 2022. Whether Catholic culture can compete with other holiday distractions is an annual question, though some will try.

Whichever culture, secular or sacred, claims our attention, the world will still overflow with timeless divinity in all things and the redemptive activity of Jesus Christ through the members of his body, born in a manger, glorified on the cross,

reborn in the church at Pentecost and sent to transform hearts and history util the end of time.

Christmas remains the only show in town on such a cosmic scale, even if lesser agendas get the headlines. God is the Lord of Creation, at work through the Holy Spirit to gather humanity into a beloved community that is the purpose of our evolving Universe. Tuning the song within the story to full harmony with God's plan is the challenge of Christmas. If we hope to be the people of good will the heavenly choir sang for, we have work to do.

The shepherds, essential workers with night jobs, were the first to know that God had come for all those left out in the cold. They were the perfect messengers for the kind of savior Jesus would be. They searched for and found the hillside stable where a desperate couple could keep a newborn wrapped in rags and out the wind. It was in their world that God chose to begin the story of redemption.

Perhaps it is because there is so much noise and neglect in our conflicted and distracted lives that we long for the peace and simplicity of the Christmas story. The pulsing lights and glowing screens blind us to the night sky's gift of clarity and stars that show us just how empty life becomes without real human relationships and compassion. God came to teach us to be human again, and this always begins within community and the circle of life.

This reflection covers Christmas Eve and Day. Pencil Preaching will resume on Sunday with the Feast of the Holy Family..

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