

Christ the King of Peace

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Glory to Jesus Christ!

In today's Epistle reading the Apostle Paul tells us to walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. He bids us to take the opportunity which is presented to us, to use the time which is given to us, to understand what the will of the Lord is and to walk in His ways.

This is the vocation of us Christians throughout our whole life: from our birth in Christ through baptism to our translation to His Heavenly Kingdom through our death.

Yet, even though this is always our way of life, at certain times during our lives as Christians, we devote ourselves more attentively and more diligently to the task of redeeming the time.

These certain times are the fasting seasons of the Church – the times when the Church prepares us to better celebrate the Lord's Great Feasts – the time when we learn to sing and make melody to the Lord more beautifully in our hearts.

And today we find ourselves nearing the end of just such a season. Today we find ourselves drawing ever closer to the celebration of the greatest event in the history of mankind – the entrance of God Himself into our world, whereby He entered into our lives and into our hearts.

In just over two weeks we will great Him as we sing with the Prophet Isaiah, "For to us a Child is born, to us a Son is given, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace."

And we will proclaim with great joy, "Christ is born! Glorify Him!"

But today, we still find ourselves in expectation, redeeming the time in preparation for celebrating the Lord's birth.

The wise men are still following the star, the shepherds are still in the fields tending their flocks, the cave and manger are still awaiting the entrance of the Son of God, who today still journeys with His Mother and her betrothed guardian Joseph from Nazareth of Galilee to Bethlehem of Judea.

And today, we are still preparing our hearts and ordering our lives so that our God can more richly and perfectly dwell within us and among us.

In His Nativity the Lord comes to us as many things and in many ways:

He comes as the Sun of Righteousness to give light to the world, enlightening those who sat in darkness and the shadow of death.

He comes as the Bread of Life, born in the city of David, in Bethlehem which literally means, "House of Bread", for by His more Pure Body He will sustain and nourish those hungry for spiritual food.

He comes as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world, for He is to offer Himself as our cleansing Paschal Sacrifice.

He comes as the wisdom and power of God for He will not only teach us how to live wisely, giving us a wisdom not of this world, but He will also empower us to live according to this wisdom by sending us His Holy Spirit.

But perhaps, on this feast, the feast of the Lord's Incarnation, the Lord comes to us most especially, as the Apostle Paul says, as the peace which passes all understanding.

We know the prophecy of Isaiah that the Lord comes to us as the Prince of Peace, the One who reconciles God with man, uniting us all to His Heavenly Father and to one another.

We know that in Christ the wall of enmity separating Jew and Gentile, slave and master, friend and foe, rich and poor, is torn down and all are united in oneness of mind and oneness of heart.

And we marvel at this remarkable peace which overcomes not only all differences in religious belief, social class, ethnicity, and personal animosity by uniting all to the one God, in one Faith, and one Body.

But what is most remarkable is not that Christ brought such a peace, but rather how He brought it. What is most remarkable is how He united us to His Father and to each other.

We know that King Herod and the Roman Empire sought to bring peace through the sword, through military rule, but this peace was uneasy and temporary. But the Lord came to bring an eternal peace, a peace which passes all understanding, and He came to give us this peace through humility, love, and self-sacrifice.

This is why the Lord from the beginning, even though He created and sustains the Universe, allowed Himself to be humbled, taking the form of a servant, being born among the lowly animals in a cave and laid in a manger.

This is why at the end of His earthly life, the Lord allowed Himself to be unjustly mocked, humiliated, beaten, spit upon, and even crucified. Because through His humility, love, and self-sacrifice He would draw all men to himself – He would unite the entire world – He would call all men to His heavenly Kingdom.

And so, brothers and sisters, as we pass the remaining two weeks of the Nativity Fast, redeeming the time, let us pay special attention to Whose Nativity we are about to celebrate, and to Whom it is we are about to receive. For the One we are to receive is the Prince of Peace, the One who calls us to unity with God and each other.

Let us do everything we can to find this peace with the Lord and with each other by following the Lord's example, for He bids us to learn from Him for He is meek and lowly of heart.

Let us follow the counsel of the Apostle Paul who tells us to bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. Let us forgive one another and so receive the remission of our own sins as we recite in the Lord's prayer.

And let us in such a manner welcome the mighty God, the Prince of Peace, Who has come to establish the peace of His kingdom in our hearts. For only in this way can we proclaim with the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill among men!"

To the Lord who is coming to be born of the Virgin and to be born again into our hearts, be the glory, together with His eternal Father, and His most-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit, always, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

Glory to Jesus Christ!