

2008

The Nativity of Our Lord



During the recent youth pilgrimage to St. James Cathedral to learn about and celebrate St. Nicholas, I asked small groups of children and teenagers (and their adult friends) to reflect with me on the image of light shining in the darkness. We gathered around a small advent wreath and listened to the proclamation of John's gospel that the darkness has never conquered the Light who is Christ.

I asked each person to write down on a card what it meant to them to say that Christ is the Light of the world. We collected all the cards in a basket. When the whole group came together later in the day to celebrate Evening Prayer, before the candles were lighted, everyone present took a card randomly from the basket and read what was on it. There were complete sentences and single words. Here are a few examples of what we heard: "Jesus gives us the power to make things different in the world. Christ is the energy that keeps everything going. Jesus loves me. Hope. Love."

Christmas reveals to us just how profoundly simple the Christian gospel is. Salvation is not esoteric or beyond our reach. It is Love lying helpless in a manger. The baby born to be the Light of the World gives us the power to change that same world. The man who gave himself to the cross for love of us makes real hope possible. There is no better summary of the Good News we preach than this: Jesus loves me. Jesus loves you. God has come to us in human flesh and blood to show us the infinite worth of every man, woman, and child who lives or dies. And God still needs our flesh. We must become the good news we proclaim so that the hungry might be fed and the homeless housed and the unlovely surprised by the joy of discovering that they are cherished beyond imagining.

The old Christmas carol prays "O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray; Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today." May God bless each and every one of us in this season with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that Christ may still make his home in this world through you and me.

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