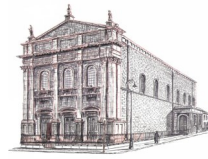




PARISH OF ST. AGATHA
24TH/25TH DECEMBER 2020



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Jesus I Trust in You

POPE FRANCIS CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Pope Francis reflected on the Gospel of the Annunciation (Lk 1:26-38), and said the invitation to Mary, to become the Mother of the Messiah carried with it both pure joy and great trial. “Certainly, the divine message would have filled Mary’s heart with light and strength,” said the Pope. “Nevertheless, she found herself faced with a crucial decision: to say ‘YES’ to God, risking everything, even her life, or to decline the invitation and to continue her ordinary life.”

ACTIVE “YES” TO GOD

Pope Francis noted how Mary offered her assent to God’s invitation with a wholehearted *fiat*: “Let it be done to me according to Your Word.” He pointed out that, in the original Greek, the expression attributed to Mary “indicates a strong desire, the firm will that something happen.” Hers was no simple, submissive “YES”, said the Pope. Mary actively bound herself to God. “She is a woman in love prepared to serve her Lord completely and immediately.”

Mary, he added, does not hesitate or impose conditions on God.

WITHOUT CONSIDERING THE COST

The Pope reflected on how often we procrastinate in life, even in our spiritual life. He said we know it would be good to pray, but that we say we don’t have time. “I know it is important to help someone, but today I can’t. I will do it tomorrow.” Yet, as we cross the threshold into the Christmas Season, Mary invites us to offer our quick and courageous “YES”, no matter the cost.

IN SPITE OF DIFFICULT CONDITIONS

Pope Francis urged Christians to consider in what ways God is inviting us to say “YES”, especially in the difficulties surrounding Christmas in 2020. “Instead of complaining in these difficult times about what the pandemic prevents us from doing, let us do something for someone who has less: not the umpteenth gift for ourselves and our friends, but for a person in need whom no-one thinks of!” The Pope then warned against letting gift-buying consume our heart ahead of the holidays. “Consumerism has stolen Christmas,” he said, pointing out that the Holy Family filled the stable in Bethlehem with poverty and love, not consumerism. Pope Francis concluded by inviting everyone to prepare our hearts for Christmas through prayer, “like Mary’s: free from evil, welcoming, ready to receive God.” (Vatican News).

ROYALTY IN A FEEDING TROUGH

The word *Manger* comes from a Latin word meaning *to eat from*, referring to an animal feeding trough. The wood of the manger will be replaced by the wood of the Cross, in order to feed the world with the Sacraments of the Church. The feeding trough today is replaced by the Altar. The Food is Christ Himself, as Living Eucharistic Bread, enabling our hearts and souls to be fed and spiritually grow in the likeness of Him. Just as babies feed off their mothers body for physical growth in the likeness of their parents. The word, Bethlehem means the *House of Bread*.

ADVENT

Advent was all about getting ready to allow the Holy Family (the Church) use our hearts as a Manger or a spiritual Altar, to make the sacrifice of living a Holy Life. The Holy Family were homeless on the streets of Bethlehem. Their poverty of spirit was reflected in their willingness to trust in God to provide everything for them, including His choice of accommodation. A cold dark stable symbolises the rejection and indifference (coldness) the world has for God, when overpowered by the darkness of a sinful life. God is Jesus and the *Light that shines in the dark; a light that darkness cannot overcome* (John 1; 5). The Holy Spirit dispels the darkness of sin in our hearts during confession and replaces it with the Joyful Peaceful Light of Christ. The baby Jesus is calling us to be humble (childlike) and confess our faults. Without Jesus, the world would remain in a state of spiritual death, ruled by Satan, the Prince of Darkness. Mathew’s Gospel on Christmas Eve, gave us the family tree of Jesus, coming from the House of David. Many of the characters throughout the generations did not always live holy lives, including King David, who once fell under the sin of adultery and murder. God is acknowledging that He calls us in our imperfections, weaknesses and faults as sinners, and wants us to know we are worthy of His Divine Mercy, no matter how bad the sins. He still wants to help us always out of Charity.

THE ESSENCE OF GOD REVEALED IN A STABLE

The Gospel of John (1:1-18), proclaimed on Christmas Day, reveals the Heavenly origin of Jesus and the reality that He always existed before He entered the womb of the Virgin Mary, because Jesus is God, but in Human Flesh now, and who is also the Word. John writes (John 1:1), that *in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He came into the World and was made Flesh*. God took on a human Nature, except His miraculous conception, in the Virginal womb of Mary, was not sourced from human *seed or carnal (sexual) urge or will of man* (John 1:13). The Heavenly Holy Spirit overshadowed the Virgin and she conceived. Just like the same Spirit overshadows the bread and wine at the consecration in Mass and they become Flesh and Blood. This supernatural conception and Birth communicates to the world, that this Miraculous Birth is the most significant spiritual event in the history of the world. It mirrors the creation of the heavens and the earth. Jesus’ nature is sinless, in order to be the Perfect Sacrifice, the unblemished and spotless Lamb of God, come to redeem the world from Satan. He comes in the spirit of Holiness, Love and Mercy, bringing New Life, so that the guilty can atone for our sins and be brought into that New Life, beginning here on earth.

RICH IN HOLINESS

Jesus chose the hard way (Hebrews 12:2) to come into the world and live, so that we can recognise Him in ourselves. He became Poor so that we might become rich in virtue and holiness. In this Novena Octave (8 days) of Christmas (25th Dec 2020 to 1st Jan 2021), let us, as a Parish Church Family, pray the Holy Rosary daily. Have a Holy, Peaceful and a Joyful Christmas Season. Thank you to everybody who continues to support the parish in these difficult times. God bless, Fr. Brendan.