



Christmas: The Nativity of Christ (A)
December 24, 2019
The Rev. Dr. Christian Brocato, Rector

† May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our Strength and Redeemer. Amen.

Two weeks ago on the Second Sunday of Advent, I preached a message that began with perception as being 9/10 of reality. Perception is perception, not always grounded in fact. Empirical reality or not, how we perceive things makes an impression on us that is often difficult to change. Thus, the need and hope that each of us will make a ‘good first impression’ on those we meet. Wherever we are, we hope that the inner spark or light that is in each of us will enable others to have a good impressions of us.

Tonight is a night that very much deals with impressions even impressions of Christmas’ past, imprinted on our minds. For some of us, memories of Christmas bring back impressions of candlelit nights at Church, opening of gifts, eggnog, special Christmas cookies and other yummy things.

For some of us, Christmas reminds us of a night of family dynamics that we would prefer not to remember. For our sisters and brothers huddled in corners of doorways or underneath bridges or behind chained fences, memories of Christmas may seem like a lifetime away.

We are a composite of our lives, shaped and formed by impressions and memories. No matter the past, we are gathered in this beautiful church where the people of God have worshipped since 1848. Tonight, we pause at this moment in time, to place ourselves in the presence of God and here before the manger.

Tonight, we are reminded that the light of the world and the hope of the world are symbolized and made present once again in Jesus, born to us, a Savior given to us, our brother and our friend. Jesus is the light which no darkness can overcome.

In a few days, we will embrace a new year. We could go on and on about 2019 as a year of chaos and turbulence in politics, disastrous decisions impacting the climate around the world, the growing loss of life because of gun violence, decisions that disrespect others, refugees at our borders and in many places in the world, and the list goes on.

We could and might ask God for healing and wholeness in our lives and for the world in which we live. We could and might ask God for a new year filled with hope for all people throughout the world.

On this holy night, hope for us and for the world is made manifest. We are gathered here as a people of hope, hope made real in the person of Jesus, the one poured into the world, God’s very self in the person of Jesus.

Jesus is the reason we are here this night. His ‘way of love’ and his amazing ability to embrace all people call us to walk in his way. We are called to embody his love for all people no matter their backgrounds, beliefs, ethnic origin, sexual identity or political persuasion. We are called to embrace and respect all our sisters and brothers as fellow travelers on the road of life.



This night, God's love for all of humanity is made real in the One born in a manger, in a stable, in an inn, at Motel 6 or wherever it was. Christ was born for us, and the reality of that birth, that indwelling of God in the world, is a source of hope and light for us and all people.

The great prophet, Isaiah, tells us that the one to come would be "a son given to us" and that authority would "rest upon his shoulders"... He would be named" Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace... And, there would "be endless peace... justice and righteousness". Isaiah assures us that the God "will do this". (Isaiah 9:2-7).

So friends in Christ, is there peace in the world? Is there peace in the hearts of those who govern the world? Is there peace in our hearts on this holy night? These are big questions. I believe that in the midst of these and other questions in life, God is with us through the grace of the Holy Spirit.

I long for answers to the questions in my life, and perhaps, you do as well. With God's help, God's grace, we can see God's hand at work even in the questions of our lives.

Awaiting the birth of Jesus, surely Mary, Joseph and all their relatives and friends had questions. The announcement and birth of Jesus were shrouded in mystery, to be sure. The One foretold by the prophets of old would be born in to the world. That birth continues to be celebrated by countless millions of people around the world.

This night represents for us a moment in time in which the light of God, the love of God, the peace of God, God's very self once again breaks into the world in marvelous ways. That light calls us to be people of truth, justice, love, mercy and hope. That light calls us to walk in love as Jesus loves us.

Love is not always easy in life, in fractured or broken relationships, in hurt, in pain and in loss. In the midst of the challenges of life, we have come to celebrate love which can bring healing and wholeness to us and to the world. If we embrace it, that love can bring light in to our lives and the lives of others.

Jesus enkindles light within us, light which no darkness can overcome. If we allow it, that light can enable us to be people of hope, bearers of God's love and catalysts of change to help make the world a better place in which to live.

I pray that we are so filled with the love of God in Jesus that we will go forth as bearers of that love. I pray for healing and wholeness in our homes, relationships, work places, institutions and wherever we find ourselves.

May the light of Christ be with us, heal us, transform us and enable us to be all we are called to be. We are the beloved of God in Jesus, the One born to us, a Savior given to us. Amen.

