

Homily – Christmas 2021

'The beauty of Christmas'

The first thing we did right at the start of our Mass tonight was bless our Crib. When we gaze on the Crib the Christmas story comes alive and we are drawn into the scene as we are called to witness to the birth of Our Lord.

It was St Francis of Assisi who assembled the first crib in a cave on an Italian hillside over 800 years ago. His aim was to make the Christmas story come alive for the people of the locality and to show them how close it was to them and to their lives.

I think that he succeeded, on Christmas Eve the friars and the people assembled with candles and torches around the crib. Francis spoke to the people who were mostly farmers and shepherds, about God's love and God's Son coming to teach us that we too are children of God, and as such we have an eternal destiny.

The shepherds and farmers got the message; God had time for simple folks like them. At the end of the vigil they returned to their homes, full of peace and joy, feeling very close to God and one another.

Luke in his Gospel gives the birth of Jesus a solemn setting. Caesar Augustus becomes an instrument of the Lord by ensuring that Jesus, the Messiah was born in Bethlehem, the town of David. His rejection at the Inn anticipates his future rejection by the Jewish people. Mary is shown to be a caring mother, wrapping her child in swaddling clothes and laying him in a manger; her loving care reflects God's loving care for us.

Since Jesus was born in poverty, it was fitting that the news of his birth was first announced to simple shepherds. This also reflects Jesus' concern mirrored by Luke, for the poor and lowly. The faith of the shepherds serves as a model for future believers, and their joy anticipates the blessings that will come to those who accept Jesus as their Saviour sent by God.

Jesus was placed in a manger. He had no proper bed, no fancy cot made with loving hands by Joseph the carpenter. The manger was borrowed from the animals and itself was part of the sign. For as the animals were fed from the manger, this child lying in the manger would be the one to feed the world in the Eucharist.

Homily – Christmas 2021

It's easy to take things for granted and forget or miss the amazing and wonderful message of Christmas. On this night we celebrate something that is miraculous, the birth of a tiny baby boy, yet like no other baby before or since; a baby who is fully human and fully divine and has come to save all of humankind.

Jesus is Emmanuel – God with us. The greatest sign that has ever been seen or given. A sign that reveals God and God's love to all. A sign that doesn't change, a sign that will never go away, a sign that lasts forever.

The first people that came to see Jesus were the lowly shepherds; they received the news of great joy that was to be shared with all people. We are the modern-day shepherds who are the recipients of that message this night, the Good News about the birth of Jesus in our Mass.

A short while ago Pope Francis met with a group of young people preparing for Christmas and he said 'that the lights of Christmas seemed dimmed by the pandemic.' He went on to tell them not to lose hope because 'Christmas is par excellence the Feast of compassion and of tenderness. Its beauty is humble and full of warmth' and he went on to stress that the beauty of Christmas shines through us in the sharing of 'small gestures of concrete love.' He told the young people to have courage, to put the person of Jesus at the centre of their lives and to allow the beauty of Christmas to shine through every daily gesture of love, sharing and service.'

We are called to be witnesses to the new-born Christ child and that message of Pope Francis is given to us this Christmas as we are invited to reflect the beauty of Christmas to others in our lives.

Let us pray that that this Christmas will be a time of great love, peace and joy for each and every one of us, for all our families and loved ones, and that we may share in the joyful song of the angels and join in the wonder and the worship of the shepherds.

On this most holy night we come to adore him, Christ the Lord.

Sending you and your loved ones my love and prayers this Christmas,
God bless, **Fr Phil x.**

Bidding Prayers and Synod Prayer

Christmas 2021

Priest:

As we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour we bring all our prayers before Our Heavenly Father.

Reader:

For the Church and Christians everywhere: may they be attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit sharing the joy and the beauty of Christmas with all. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For peace this Christmas and an end to war, violence, hatred and division everywhere. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those who are poor or in need: following the example of Christ may we always help and serve them particularly at this Christmas time with love, generosity and compassion. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For migrants and refugees, particularly our refugees here in Wallasey; may we do all we can to help and support them. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For those in our parish who are sick or housebound: may they come to know the love, peace and the comforting presence of Christ.
Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

For the faithful departed especially **Ian Morton** and all who have died recently and those whose anniversaries occur around this time: **“Eternal rest grant unto them...”**

We pray through the intercession of Mary our mother: **“Hail Mary...”**

In silence we bring our own private prayers and intentions before the Lord.

Priest:

Loving Father,
As we celebrate the birth of Jesus this Christmas we offer these and all our prayers to you, through your Son Jesus, who is Christ Our Lord, Amen.

Bidding Prayers and Synod Prayer Christmas 2021

Synod Prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.

All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever. **Amen**