

Pastor's Corner - Christmas 2011

On November 27 we heard a call from Jesus in the Gospel of Mark to "Stay awake" and to actively watch and wait for the unveiling of a great mystery. This week our four weeks of preparation has come to the end and with the whole of creation and all people of good will we can rejoice because once more God, the ground of all being, has found us and brings us peace. God's unconditional love and forgiveness offered to us at our well-attended communal reconciliation service of December 15 and which made us whole again, is now bearing fruit in the birth of Christ in our midst, in our hearts. The Light of the World, the Light of my life is renewing me and is again with me continuing the journey of life. Even if I think I am not ready God has already taken the initiative and comes to me to renew me and to make me whole again. All I have to do is to let go of my anger, of my failings, to let go of all that oppresses me, to be truly repented and to welcome Him back home in my heart and in my being. All I have to do is to inhale God's power, life and love so that I can become little by little, one day at a time, the person God has intended me to be.

That is why we can say "**Today** is born our Saviour!" And in a way I can say "Today is born **my** Saviour!" Yes, we are part of a new birth, of a new beginning that begins today and continues as a new beginning tomorrow. The readings of these last four weeks continue to encourage us to be patient and hopeful, to be prayerful, and always to be given over to joyful gratitude for the many of God's gracious and daily blessings which are showered on us every day of our lives. We are not so much bearing gifts for the babe of Bethlehem but rather the child Jesus brings us the gift of His Spirit to be with us always and to inspire and encourage us so that we might become sharers in the divine nature of God. **Meister Eckhart, a 14th century mystic of the Dominican Order, wrote: "There is only one birth – and this birth takes place in the ground and core of the soul. Not only is the Son of the heavenly Creator born in this darkness, but you too are born there as a child of the same heavenly Creator and none other."**

Christmas reminds us that our only response to God's daily blessings lies in the gift of ourselves in return, in the words of Micah "to do justice, love tenderly, and walk humbly with God." In this season of gift-giving our greatest gift is of our very selves: to let shine through us the gifts and talents that God has given to each and everyone of us without exception. Yes, God has given us these gifts so that we might reflect them in what we are, in what we do, in what we say. Like all gifts they cannot remain wrapped and hidden; we need to unwrap them so that they can become gifts of joy for others. Those gifts of our very selves include our talents, our time, our treasure, our caring, our compassion, our prayers, our love.

In the early Church people called **Christmas the sacrum commercium, the "holy exchange": God becomes human in Jesus, God's gift of love to us, so that the human can become divine.** We are reminded once more that the greatest gift of all is God's love for us and our love for each other.

May the peace and joy of Christ's birth bring you and yours that wholeness of peace, joy and hope in a spirit of thanksgiving. And may this coming New Year of 2012 be for you a year of holy exchange, giving praise to God by unwrapping the gift you are for the joy of others. Shalom!

Je Rolf, OP