

Homily – The Nativity of our Lord
Christmas Eve and Christmas Day 2021
Sooeey / Riverstown

Jeff was a man who simply could not believe in the incarnation. The idea that God actually became a human being struck him as nonsensical. So, as his family drove to attend the Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve, Jeff stayed at home alone, not wanting to be a hypocrite. It then started snowing quite heavily as it was getting dark, and a group of small birds began thumping into his picture window, seeking refuge from the weather. The man put on his jacket and boots and went outside to try and lead the birds into the warmth and safety of his barn. But the more Jeff tried, the more the birds scattered. And then he realized that they were afraid of him. To them, Jeff thought, he was a strange and terrifying creature.

So, he said to himself: “If only I could be a bird and mingle with them and speak their language, then I could tell them not to be afraid. Then I could show them the way to the safe warm barn. But I would have to be one of them, so that they could ‘see, hear and understand’.”

At that very moment, the Church bells began to ring. The sound reached his ears above the sound of the wind. And he stood there listening to the bells pealing the glad tidings of Christmas. Suddenly he realized that “all that

incarnation stuff” was true. He now understood why Jesus came to the earth to be one among us, one with us and one for us. And then, he sank into his knees in the snow and prayed. And his lips began muttering: “Emmanuel – God with us”.

Yes! God wanted to be with us, among us and in us: “Emmanuel, God with us”. And that is what we are celebrating today.

When we read through the entire Bible meditatively, when we go through the salvation history prayerfully, we realize that God is always trying to get through to us. He is always so eagerly trying to get through to us so that we might learn of His love, His mercy and His invitation to everlasting life. He gave us creation, the Garden of Eden, the people of Israel, the prophets, the Kingdom, Moses, the 10 commandments, deliverance from captivity and slavery in Egypt, but God couldn’t quite seem to get through to us. Not God’s fault, but our fault.

And finally, Yes! If we can picture God our Father saying: “Well! I have almost tried everything in trying to get through to the people I love. And nothing seems to work. And now, I think there is only one thing left. I am going to send them my son. Yes! I think I am going to send them my only son as a baby to teach them of my love, my mercy and my invitation to eternal salvation.

God our Father knew that nothing, nothing changes lives like a baby. Nothing gets through to us more than the gift of a baby. And that is what we are celebrating tonight. God finally got through to us.

And so, we can now never say after Christmas: “God is aloof, God is distant”. Rather, we can only say: God is with us, Emmanuel. Yes! We have a God who became a baby. We have a God whom we can pick up and hold close to our hearts. We have a God whom we can love and accept into our lives. We have a God who transforms our lives like only a baby can do.

But the question is: Do we let Him into our life? Do we open the doors of our lives, make some room for Him and welcome Him in? Do we allow Him to be reborn in our hearts?

Well, A Christmas story is told of a Seventh-Grade boy named William Spurling. William was big for his age, though he was not as bright as his companions. But he was a very good boy and all the kids liked him. In fact, they wanted him for a friend because he was big enough to take their part if they needed him.

Now, they were going to have the Christmas programme in the School and William wanted to be a shepherd. But the teacher decided that he would make a better inn-

keeper than a shepherd. So, she gave him the task of being the rough, mean inn-keeper.

Now, when Mary and Joseph came to the inn and knocked on the door, William Spurling opened it. And to their request for a place to stay, he harshly said: “There is no room in the inn”. But Joseph persisted: “See, my wife is tired and weary and she is expecting a baby. Isn’t there just a small room here, where we could rest?”. William was not moved and he said: “You will have to find a place somewhere else. There is no room here in the inn”. But Joseph pleaded once again for some place for them to stay just for that night. Then there was a long pause, one that was embarrassing for the audience as well as for the cast. William had forgotten his next line.

And now, you could hear the prompter telling him: “I said No, be gone!”. Actually, that was his next speech. And now, William very softly and gently said: “No, be gone”. Hearing that, Mary and Joseph sadly turned to leave. But as they did, William suddenly regained his voice and said: “Wait, wait a minute! You can stay in my room, and I will sleep in the shed”.

In the stunned silence that followed, the teacher thought the play was ruined, until she thought again of the words of the Seventh-Grade boy, who in fact communicated so

powerfully the real truth of Christmas. “No, you can stay in my room, and I will sleep in the shed”.

Well! Dear brothers and sisters, Remember, that every knock on our door left unanswered is an ignoring of Christ. If he is not born in our hearts and in our homes this Christmas, what happened in Bethlehem long ago is not really a cause of celebration and joy. It is in a million acts of kindness, forgiveness and generosity that Christmas shines through.

So, let's take care not to turn Jesus away during this Christmas. There's a beautiful quote I love repeating: “Each of us is an inn keeper who decides if there's room for Jesus”. And as the German mystic Angelus Silesius would say: “Christ could be born a thousand times in Bethlehem – but all in vain until He is born in me”

Let's keep this in mind this Christmas and invite Jesus into every room of our homes and into the depths of our own hearts. He makes all the difference in our lives and in the world. And this Baby whom we worship is the Saviour of the world, this Baby whom we worship is the only begotten Son of God. So, come, let us adore Him, **Amen.**

