

Homily –John1: 1-18  
Second Sunday of Christmas, Year C  
1st / 2nd January 2022

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Eight-year-old Benny died of AIDS in 1987. CBS made a movie drama about the trauma called *Moving Toward the Light*. As Benny lies dying in his mother's arms, he asks, "What will it be like?" His mother whispers softly in his ear, "You will see a light, Benny, far away — a beautiful, shining light at the end of a long tunnel. And your spirit will lift you out of your body and start to travel toward the light. And as you go, a veil will be lifted from your eyes, and suddenly, you will see everything ... but most of all, you will feel a tremendous sense of love." "Will it take long?" Benny asks. "No," his mother answers, "not long at all. Like the twinkling of an eye." Amid the darkness and despair an eight-year-old boy and his mother witnessed to the sustaining power of the light of God's presence. And that is what Saint John tells us in today's Gospel, 'that God is light and that in Him is no darkness at all.

John the evangelist in today's Gospel is trying to tell us that the Infinite God, at a point in time, crossed an unimaginable border and personally entered our world. And so, 2000 years ago, like a great star, Jesus came down from heaven and lit up the darkness of the world.

The Gospel Reading of today would speak of Jesus as “the real light that comes and shines on all” And it adds: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out”.

Now, what Jesus was to the world of His time, He wants us to be to the world of our time. We too must be a beam of light in the midst of darkness, a ray of hope in the midst of despair”.

Just recently, I happened to read about the custom of placing lighted candles in the windows at Christmas that was brought to America by the Irish. When religion was suppressed throughout Ireland during the English persecution, it read, the people had no Churches. And priests hid in the forests and caves, and secretly visited the farms and homes to celebrate Mass there during the night. It was the dearest wish of every Irish family that at least once in their lifetime a priest would arrive at Christmas to celebrate Mass. For this grace they hoped and prayed all through the year. When Christmas came, they left their doors unlocked and placed burning candles in the windows, so that any priest who happened to be in the vicinity could be welcomed and guided to their home through the dark night. Silently the priest would enter through the unlatched door and be received by the devout inhabitants with fervent prayers of gratitude and tears of happiness that their home was to become a Church for

Christmas. To justify this practice in the eyes of the English soldiers, the Irish people explained that they burned the candles and kept the doors unlocked so that Mary and Joseph, looking for a place to stay, would find their way to their home and be welcomed with open hearts. Well, I believe the candles in the windows have always remained a cherished practice of our people here in Ireland, although many of them probably have long since forgotten the earlier meaning.

Well! The invitation that is extended to each of us on this Second Sunday of Christmas is this: that we become a beam of light in the midst of darkness, a ray of hope in the midst of despair". And as Pope Francis reminds us in his homily this year for the celebration of Vespers and the recitation of the *Te Deum* on New Year's Eve, "Let us trust in joyful times and in sorrowful times: the hope He gives us, Yes, the hope Christ gives us is a hope that never disappoints."

Well, dear friends, if Jesus is to be born into today's world, it must be through you and me. To the extent that we heed the invitation of this season, to that extent, will the world receive the gift of Christmas: 'peace on earth and good will toward all'.

God bless you all, **Amen.**