

## CHRISTMAS HOMILY 2014

1. Today we make a great act of faith
  - a. Celebrate belief that Savior has been born
    - i. a child born 2000 years ago has changed world
  - b. Skeptics and unbelievers readily point out darkness of world has not disappeared
    - i. Still wars, violence, hunger and poverty
  - c. Even though every religion proclaims peace, yet so many wars in name of religion
2. Why do we celebrate Christmas, why is it more than secular holiday of gift exchange
  - a. Christmas is a season of hope, not optimism
    - i. Optimism is a Pollyannaish idea that things will surely get better if we wait long enough
    - ii. Too idealistic about Christmas, can lead to cynicism as see continuing power and force of anger and fear
  - b. We must remember Christmas is not just about romantic images
    - i. Jesus was born in a stable because his parents were immigrants
    - ii. Bethlehem was home of ancestors not Joseph.
      1. He did not have enough money to get a room in the inn
    - iii. Only the powerless like shepherds and foreigner realize that God is present in Jesus
    - iv. Sense of danger around Jesus, just the hint that he might be a future rival to Herod led to massacre of Holy Innocents and the Holy Family having to flee to Egypt
    - v. Story of Jesus life involves followers misunderstanding his message. Looking for power and influence
    - vi. Ultimately the people of power the Romans, the chief priests, Herod son of the original conspire to have Jesus executed as a common criminal
  - c. When think of Jesus life at first might wonder why do we remember him, he looks like a failure
    - i. Mystery of Jesus is that despite all the power of evil, Jesus conquered its ultimate penalty death
    - ii. In the resurrection of Jesus we learn that God really has changed world
    - iii. He has given us the freedom of knowing that in Jesus nothing can ultimately harm us
3. Hope as Christians is that we given power of the Holy Spirit to do Jesus work
  - a. We gather together to remember that God has entered this world
  - b. He is using us bring the message of hope to world
  - c. Even though there is suffering and oppression in the world, with God we can make a difference
    - i. Gift of Faith given to us in Christmas calls us to look beyond the power of evil
4. we begin to see the power of the resurrection within ourselves
  - a. Despite the promotion of selfishness around us,
    - i. yet during this season we are moved to generosity to the poor who can never repay us
  - b. Even though the problems of the world seem insoluble,
    - i. yet we have the courage to begin to face them

- c. By the grace of God we look at our daily jobs as more than just means of making a living,
    - i. we recognize them as vocations to serve God through his children
  - d. Our hope is strengthened when we look around and see some of the recent heroes of our time
    - i. People like Mother Teresa, Dorothy Day, Archbishop Oscar Romero
    - ii. These people chose to love the poor even when it seemed foolish and subversive to do so
    - iii. Realize that these are merely the most visible of many Christians who continue to make sacrifices to serve God
5. Christian hope differs from optimism is that it does not believe world will get better by itself
- a. Rather it believes that just like Christmas God will do the impossible
  - b. Just as he became human in Jesus
  - c. So he will use us to bring light and life into the darkness of the world around us
  - d. Light will not come without a struggle, we may even appear to be losing the battle for goodness
  - e. Our faith reassures us, if we look with the eyes of God we will see that his love is truly dawning in the world
  - f. even as the world struggles with the power of evil, By our work it is becoming a holy place