

CHRISTMAS HOMILY 2017

1. Light and darkness not just Christmas themes
 - a. Almost universal in Northern cultures
 - b. Shortness of days, cold weather leads to natural fear
 - i. Is this the end of life
 - c. Ancestors noticed that at the winter solstice, a change began
 - d. The light was returning, there was hope even in the cold
 - e. So, they celebrated with lights and gift giving
 - f. Gift giving is a sign of hope in itself
 - g. Difficult to be generous when we are afraid of losing everything
 - h. But confidence that a renewal of life is coming leads to hope and celebration
2. When the early Church began to gain influence in Roman society
 - a. How do we celebrate the greatest gift of all
 - b. God joining Himself to us in the person of Jesus
 - c. Christians wanted to proclaim their beliefs about Jesus
 - d. Jesus is the source of true salvation and life
 - e. People are celebrating with joy confidence in temporary spring
 - f. They are celebrating during the season darkness with lights
 - g. Confidence that the light will return to world but only for a time
3. Romans celebrated Saturnalia, the Germanic tribes celebrated yuletide with feasting and merry makings
4. The time of Jesus birth is not identified in the bible
 - a. Saw a way to evangelizing the common people, who lack the education to read the bible
 - b. They would take the common customs and give them new meaning
5. Celebration of lights is not just about rejoicing that the sun is returning to its brightness and power
 - a. We also celebrate that God has entered the world in Jesus
 - b. He is the light that conquered even the darkness of death
 - c. Light that He is promising is a light that will give us eternal life
6. Sharing of food and drink celebrated the hope that spring and summer would come with crops and abundance of food

- a. Church pointed out that Jesus in the Last Supper gave us His Body and Blood as eternal food
 - b. When we share the body and blood of Jesus, we are not merely receiving nourishment to sustain life
 - c. We are receiving life itself, our God who will lead us to eternal life
7. Sharing of gifts express affection and confidence for the future
- a. Jesus is the ultimate gift, God giving Himself to us
 - b. He is the ultimate expression of love and affection
8. We often complain about the commercialization of Christmas
- a. There is an element of avarice and greed expressed in this holiday
9. Yet like the early Christians we can look beyond the very pagan celebrations of the holiday season
- a. We can see them as natural signs of Christian hope
 - b. Today we celebrate with the world
 - c. But we celebrate that the true light has come into the world
 - d. We have a deeper, permanent joy that through the birth of Christ we have access to God Himself.