

## Homily 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent 2024

**He does away with the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:9-10) - Today's Second Reading)**

It was with great interest, I read a Christmas article from The Catholic Herald on things transcendent (things above human reason), sent to me by a parishioner of Holy Redeemer, Maria Swanson (See the article details below\*). The piece argues that our Christian faith is not solely based on a belief in the transcendent but also on the Incarnation, God becoming man in a concrete time and place. The article emphasises Jesus' life and death as a historical fact, indeed this is documented by both Jewish and Roman historians, Josephus and Pliny respectively. One would never question the existence of Julius Caesar yet there is more documented historical evidence of the life and death of Jesus than of Caesar. Our faith is therefore, not without rationality. Faith and reason embraced together make our belief both in a transcendent God and in The Incarnate God, Jesus, credible yet still full of mystery. It is interesting also that Frank Morison, in his classic 'Who Moved the Stone?', 1930, also argues the rational case convincingly for the historical Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus based on documented evidence and eye-witness accounts.

The historical reality of Jesus' life, death and Resurrection gets even more exciting when we understand The Sacred Liturgy as "the praising and thanking God by the RELIVING of the events of Christ's life IN OUR TIME AND IN OUR SPACE through signs and symbols. In other words, TODAY, 22nd December 2024 the Prophet Micah truly addresses you and me with the great promise and joyful message, 'Thus says the LORD: You, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth the one who is to be ruler of Israel.' TODAY, through The Sacred Liturgy of The Word, Mary and Elizabeth stand before us HERE AND NOW warmly embracing one another as their babies leap for joy within them. TODAY at Mass we witness those beautiful words of Elizabeth to Mary, 'Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb, Jesus!' How stunningly beautiful is that image of the unborn John and Jesus dancing joyfully in their cousins' wombs.

With such understanding of The Sacred Liturgy our excitement will intensify over the next three days. So, in the days leading up to Christmas, let us not simply remember Mary and Joseph's demanding journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem but let us BE PRESENT with them on the road. Let us on Christmas Eve, not look back nostalgically at the birth of Jesus but let us BE PRESENT in that lowly stable, listening to the song of the angels HERE AND NOW. Let us truly witness, the birth of Jesus IN THE PRESENT MOMENT, and let us BE, together with the shepherds, humble visitors to our newborn King. Finally, like the poor shepherd boy let us TODAY, this Christmas morning, give Jesus the greatest and most precious gift of all, the gift of our heart, the gift of action driven love of God and one another.

If we truly give Jesus our hearts and really live out the command of Jesus, 'loving God and one another' people will certainly take note and say, 'See how these

Christians love one another.' Such living witness will provide a much more powerful case of our God PRESENT in the world TODAY than any philosophical debate on faith and reason.

A Christmas full of His "joy" and His "peace"

\*"The joy of unexpected things" an article by Ken Craycraft.

Due to copyright constraints we are unable to reproduce the article here but it may be read in full (about 5 minute read) by following this link:

<https://catholicherald.co.uk/the-joy-of-unexpected-things>