



25 December 2018, 8 a.m. | Christmas Day

Isaiah 52:7-10 | Psalm 97:1-6 | Hebrews 1:1-6 | Luke 2:15-20

GOD'S SIMPLE MESSAGE

Homily

My dear sisters and brothers, I would like to share with you on this beautiful Christmas morning a very simple message. A message that comes from the simplicity of the Lord's birth in a stable, laid in a trough used to feed animals – a manger.

The gospel of today speaks about the angels who come to the shepherds and give them a message. The gospel says, in a very interesting manner recorded by St. Luke, that the angels returned to heaven immediately after delivering the message. This may be a small detail but it tells us something important. The angels came, gave the message and quickly left. We don't know why this is so; maybe God did not want them to spend too much time on earth. God does not waste time telling us long stories.

The Greek meaning of the word 'angel' is *angelos*, meaning 'messenger'. The angels are messengers of God. They come and make quick contact with the shepherds, give them the message and leave. In our lives too, God will often give us quick messages through his angels, and if we are not attentive and alert enough to hear the message, it will be lost.

The angels did not come to the scribes and Pharisees because they were too learned; they had too many preconceived ideas about the Messiah – that he should be a powerful man, wielding political control. If they had to receive this simple message from the angels, they would have started discussing; they would have called a council and said, 'Let us examine this and see whether it is true'; they would resist the simplicity of the message.

We must know the background of shepherds during the time of Jesus. They were people who worked in the fields most of the day. They were not educated, either in the secular field or in religious matters. And so, they were open to God's giving to them, not an extraordinary message but a simple one. They would listen to that message and accept it without doubt or question.

Many of us stop God from speaking because we question him and resist the message of his angels. We have our own prejudices and are too preoccupied. Even when we come to pray, we give God messages; we don't sit in silence and listen to him. God says something to us each day. If we do not accept that quick contact, it could be lost. This morning, when we go to the crib and see the decorations in the compound, maybe God is giving us a simple message: to be careful with the way we use the resources of the earth and not to waste.

What is God saying to you this morning? As you go back home after Mass, if you have a conflict with a family member, can you make a small gesture of peace and forgiveness? In order to receive the simple message, we must be as simple as the shepherds.

In a very interesting book called 'The Little Prince', the fox tells the little prince, 'This is my secret. It is most simple. We see correctly only with our heart. The essential is invisible to the eyes'.

We see with our hearts when we experience God who is become man. What were the angels telling the shepherds? Go and you will see a mother and father with a little child lying in a manger. The gospel says they were amazed by that message. When we read the newspapers, what is it that amazes us? Not simple things; we look for sensational things – a murder, a scandal. The message of the incarnation is simplicity. The word became flesh. We go to the crib and we see a baby crying. There is no word, and yet, in the

simplicity of the birth of the child in a manger, there is a message for us – a message that God, who becomes human, comes in the simplicity of the daily happenings in our lives. May we be attentive to the simple messages, because the essentials are often invisible. God's messages are subtle and invisible. Can we be open to these messages?

My dear sisters and brothers, during the course of the day, we will encounter certain persons, and it is the simple people who may tell us something about who God is. Can we be open to God who comes quickly and in the most simple manner? That is the incarnation – God becoming human in all its simplicity, in all its weakness, in all its frailty. God is speaking to us simply and quickly. Let us, like the shepherds, listen to his message and share it with others – the Good News that Jesus is born.

This evening, people of all faiths will come to see the crib and pray in the church. The people of our parish who will welcome and guide them will share with them the simple message of Christmas. May we also discover the simplicity of God who speaks to us through the incarnation, Amen.



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