

Christmas Homily, 2025

Today we celebrate a mystery so familiar that we can easily forget how astonishing it truly is. Christmas did not begin with lights, decorations, or grand celebrations. It began quietly - with God choosing to come close to us.

When Pope Julius I designated December 25 as the celebration of the birth of Christ in the fourth century (AD 353), no one could have imagined what Christmas would become. In 1223, St. Francis of Assisi created the first living manger in a simple cave, with straw, an ox, and a donkey, to help people encounter the humility of the Incarnation. Centuries later, in 1832, the first Christmas tree in America was lit. Traditions grew, customs developed, and celebrations expanded - but the heart of Christmas never changed.

So we must ask ourselves today: What is the message of Christmas?

The message is simple and profound:

God is born for us.

Not because we earned it.

Not because we deserved it.

But because God loves us.

He want to be Emmanuel, God is with us.

The child in the manger is pure gift. God enters the world not with power, but with vulnerability. Not in a palace, but in a stable. Moreover, in doing so, God reveals that His love is meant for all - crossing boundaries of culture, nation, and even religion.

There is a story that beautifully captures this truth. Under a cultural exchange program, a rabbi from Russia was visiting a Christian family in

Texas during Christmastime. Wanting to show him hospitality, they took him out to dinner - to a Chinese restaurant in Houston. During the meal, the rabbi spoke with joy about the freedom and goodness he experienced in America. When the meal ended, the waiter brought the check - along with a fortune cookie and a small brass Christmas tree ornament as a gift for the rabbi.

Everyone laughed when they noticed the ornament was stamped "*Made in India.*" But suddenly, the laughter stopped. The rabbi was quietly crying.

They worried he might be offended by receiving a Christmas ornament. But when asked, he smiled and said, "No - these are tears of joy. Imagine this: in a free country, in a Chinese restaurant, a Buddhist gives a Jew a Christmas gift made by a Hindu."

Brothers and Sisters, that moment captured something deeply human - and deeply Christian. Christmas reminds us that God's love is bigger than borders, traditions, or labels. The child born in Bethlehem came not for one people alone, but for the whole world.

The Psalmist invites us to sing of the goodness of the Lord. Our proper response to Christmas is gratitude - gratitude for a God who comes close, who enters our broken world, and who invites us to reflect His love.

Christmas also invites us to silence. In a noisy world, God speaks softly. The Christ Child teaches us to grow in silence, to hear the gentle voice of Love, and to recognize God not only in the manger - but in every human heart.

As we celebrate today, may we welcome the Savior with praise and thanksgiving. May we create space in our hearts for silence, gratitude, and compassion. Moreover, may the Christ born in Bethlehem be born anew in each of us, so that through our lives, His love may be known to all.

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL!