

Christmas Day
December 25, 2011 - Cycle B

“A Wondrous Event”

Once upon a real time, a long time ago, under the same stars, under the same heavenly constellations that astronomers view today a wondrous event occurred. An invisible universe was joined to the visible universe. Heaven was joined to earth. Divinity embraced humanity.

Once upon a real time, a long time ago, a unique star appeared in the heavens as a sign to the world that things were changing; that the old chains of sin and death were about to be broken through the birth of a Saviour. Angels announced this birth of a boy-child, born in Bethlehem. Shepherds heard the glad tidings, *“Glory to God in the highest and peace to His people on earth.”* The shepherds went in haste to Bethlehem and found the child just as the angels described. It was a child of the house and lineage of King David, born of

Mary, and wrapped in swaddling clothes, and found in a stable. The event

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was an occurrence of opposites; it was a paradox. How and why should God be fully human and fully divine? And yet, that is what we celebrate.

Wise sages from the east saw the special star at its rising, and guided by this ethereal sign, three monarchs, wise in the ways of the world and in the ways of God, made their way to Jerusalem of Judea. Their names were Gaspar, Melchior, and Balthazar. Upon finding the child they presented Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold is for a King. Frankincense is for God. And Myrrh is for sacrifice and death. And surely this child was King, God and Sacrifice. He is King of all creation. Without Him, nothing came into being. He is God's own Son, co-equal with the Father for all eternity, yet now visible in time and space, at a particular hour and place. And He is the sacrificial event that changed the world.

It was during the reign of the Roman Emperor Caesar Augustus, that this child was born. His

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reputation as Son of David, with miraculous powers and messianic redemptive qualities, caused consternation in the mind of King Herod and confusion in all Jerusalem.

The wise sages, knowing better, and fearing the cruelty of King Herod, returned to their own land under cover of darkness and secrecy. For the world, while it was made through the Son and takes its created integrity from him, who is the perfect idea of creation and who is forever united with the uncreated God, the world knew nothing of these things and so knew Him not. This child was light for the children of God, hope for the sinner and resurrection for the dying and the dead. But the world knew Him not.

Can it be that through this Child, heaven was wed to earth, divinity to humanity, an invisible world to a visible world?

Many attested to this Saviour of the world. John the Baptist was his forerunner and herald. Martha

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and Mary witnessed His power, His healing, the miraculous raising of Lazarus. Apostles, too, affirmed the presence of this God-man on earth.

Wherever He went, all knew that the life of the Saviour was “love following upon love.” There was no guile in Jesus; no sin; no selfishness; no ulterior motives to gain power, wealth, or the world. Rather, His power was in the Word that He spoke; the healing He rendered, and the peace He shared. It was a peace not of this world and yet it was a peace we cannot do without. But because of the paradox of His life and the paradox of His preaching, that He would teach us how to die in order to live; to die to selfishness and so rise to a life of love and service for God and for neighbor - - no, no. The world was not ready for that mystery, the “paschal mystery.” It was not ready for the new Passover of the Lord.

Certainly, if He wanted His own kind of paschal mystery, He could have it. So the world handed Him suffering and death. The world could see no benefit

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in this suffering Servant of God; so let Him have His suffering and death.

Yes, despite all the rejection, He was born to share the Life and Love of God, even if it cost His life; and that is what happened. But God cannot be contained, not even by death. And He rose from death and He rose from the doubts imposed upon Him.

Once, a long time ago, once upon a real time, a child who was Jesus of Nazareth, was born of the Virgin Mary. Once a long time ago, through this Infant King, heaven was wed to earth; divinity embraced humanity and we were never the same.

So we pray: *Lord Jesus, through the wonder of the Incarnation you took on our human nature. Lord Jesus, You are Emanuel, God with us. When we despair of our human nature, You give us hope.*

When we cannot believe in ourselves, or in each other, You give us a reason to believe. When we lose all heart and affection for each other, You

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restore our love; for You are Love eternal and we see in You the ultimate gift of self-giving. Help us to give of ourselves to each other as You gave yourself to us. Lord Jesus, our nature is a paradox, a riddle strung out between heaven and earth; between the visible and invisible; between humanity and divinity; between mortality whereby humans die, and immortality whereby there is no death, no time, but only the present, and presence of God. Through the Eucharist that we celebrate, Your eternal real presence is made known to us, shared with us, at Your command, in this experience of word and communion. Teach us by Your infancy that we are to

approach You and love You without fear just as the shepherds and holy sages approached the child that was You, and took You into their yearning

hearts; they were changed forever, happy forever. And dear Lord, if for some of us this is all too impossible to accept, may Your saving presence at this Mass help us. Lord Jesus, You are truth beyond all verification;

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You are wisdom beyond all reasonableness; You are love beyond all desire. You are the miracle of the ages, witnessed by Apostles, Martyrs, and Saints. You are the beginning and the end of all things, the Alpha and the Omega. Help us, at this Mass, to give thanks for the wonder, mystery, and reality of Your birth, and for all that You have done for us. We ask this prayer in Your name for You live forever and ever. Amen.

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