

[www.sjti.ac.za/resources\\_homily.htm](http://www.sjti.ac.za/resources_homily.htm)

**First Reading:** Isaiah 9:2-7  
**Response:** *"Today a saviour has been born to us; he is Christ the Lord"* (Lk.2:11)  
**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 95:1-3,11-13  
**Second Reading:** Titus 2:11-14  
**Gospel:** Luke 2:1-14.

Christ the Lord is in our midst. He is Emmanuel, God with us. He, the eternal Word through the ages, became flesh (Incarnation). This is what we celebrate at Christmas.

Why is Isaiah ecstatic? Having seen the ruination of his people and their spiritual blindness God now grants him the prophetic insight of how *"the people that walked in darkness have seen a great light"* (Is.9:2). We celebrate Christ as the great light.

Even as the bright light of the sun can be overshadowed by clouds, so Christmas can be cluttered with commercialism. We are losing sight of who is the *"Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty God, Eternal-Father, Prince of Peace"* (Is.9:6)

The shepherds found him in a crib. People today should find him in your heart and home. Our song is the Christmas response: *"Today a saviour has been born to us; he is Christ the Lord"* (Lk.2:11).

In proclaiming Him, we *"sing a new song to the Lord"* (Ps. 95:1). What's new? He has come, creating a whole new world, new life, salvation for all.

Christ is born to us today so that through us he may appear to the whole world. *"God's grace has been revealed to the whole human race"* (Titus 2:11).

*"And has made salvation possible"* (Titus 2:11). Salvation is *Jeshua'h*, Jesus. Salvation warrants commitment on our part, to believe in God's Word, to be one with the Lord and bring his grace to others.

Jesus is born in a moment in time when *"Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census"* (Lk.2:1). It is a moment, eternal and divine, as witnessed by *"a great throng of the heavenly host"* (Lk.2:14).

The Messiah comes, not with pomp and glory but with a humble beginning, *"wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger"* (Lk.2:7). No room for him at the inn symbolizes sinful humanity having no place for Christ in our homes, as seen in the modern world today.

Read the **Gospel** (Lk.2:1-14) again and ponder the Christmas events and the message.

Focus on how Christ is in Word and Sacrament in the Eucharistic **Liturgy**.

Celebrating Christmas means celebrating Christ's-Mass and living the Incarnation when receiving his body and his blood. (**Doctrine**)

Put Christ back into Christmas and encourage others to do the same (**Witness**)

### **FOR THE CHILDREN**

Share the Christmas story with the children according to the Gospel of Luke 2:1-14.

Let the children focus on the Word of God (readings) in the Eucharistic celebration.

Explain to the children the proper Teaching and meaning of Christmas.

We see how Christ comes and gives himself to us. Decide how we can give to him.

## **FOR TEENAGERS**

- My Present Action:** What is your understanding of Christmas?
- Your Story and Vision:** What are your experiences and hope for Christmas?
- Church's Story:** How does the Church teach and celebrate Christmas?
- Church's Story and Your Story:** Where do you and the Church have common ground?
- Your Vision and Church's Vision:** Seek ways where you and Church can be of one mind for the Christmas season and building God's Kingdom.

## **RCIA**

Christmas means *Shekinah*, God's presence among his people, the Incarnation. God is with his people in flesh and blood. The Resurrection is a glorious continuation of the Incarnation. Christ's risen body, wounded on earth is present and experienced in Word and Sacraments and in us.

## **LIFE EXPERIENCE**

When reading about St. Augustine of Canterbury's experiences as a missionary to the warring Anglo-Saxon clans, it reminded me of my missionary experience in the Valley of a Thousand Hills. The Zulu mission of Nsutha witnessed a lot of fighting between the Chonco and the Gasa clans. My catechist, Felix Ngcobo, got the bright idea of getting the children to put on an open-air Christmas scene portraying the Prince of Peace. Parents helped the children in setting up the props and the borrowing of livestock for stable scenes. All families joined in the happy event. Who said Christmas doesn't change the world? It happened in the Valley of a Thousand Hills where families saw their children as shepherds and angels, and through them found the Prince of Peace. Christmas goes beyond tribal barriers, says Augustine *qua* missionary, and can "bring people together in joyful unanimity" (i)

(i) DEANSELY Margaret. "AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY". *Saint Austin Press*, Southampton. 1997. p.137.

## **LITTLE ANGELINA**

"When does your Christmas tree grow up?" Angelina was asked. "It is not suppose to grow," was Angelina's reply, determined to cut creation down to size. We may not have full control of the natural part of us, but interestingly, we do have a say in the supernatural side. Unlike the Christmas tree that grows naturally, we grow spiritually if we want to.

## **IMPORTANT WORD:** "**Firstborn**" (Lk.2:7), בְּכוֹר (Bakor), Πρωτοτοκος, **Primogenitum**

Firstborn in Hebrew, בְּכוֹר (*bakor*) is the title of every firstborn child even if the only child in the family. Significantly, the Egyptians lost their firstborn in the plagues (*Exod. 11:5*) and Israel consecrated their firstborn to Yahweh (*Exod.13:2*). Israel itself is considered the firstborn among the nations (*Exod.4:22*). So it is clear in Jewish thinking that the firstborn has special status whether he is the only-begotten or not. Mention of Jesus as firstborn does not necessarily imply that Mary had other children. If Jesus had blood brothers and sisters, why did he on the cross, give his mother to John, son of Zebedee? Note that the sacred tabernacle with the Ark of the Covenant allowed the entry of the high-priest only once a year into the presence of God. Jesus is the *Shekinah*, שְׁכִינָה, full presence of God, Son of God, the Incarnation in the womb of Mary. Is that not more than the holy tabernacle with the Ark of old? Why should other persons equal the Holy of Holies in the consecrated womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary that carried the only-begotten Son of God? Here the ancient sages give credit to insight and understanding, "a superior person can recognize the ordinances of heaven," (i) and the mystery of God.

(i) K'UNG FU-TSU (CONFUCIUS). "The Analects". **Book 19. Ch.III** NuVision Publications, LLC. USA. 2007. p.cii

**Watchword:** “Listen, I bring you news of great joy” (Lk.2:10).

Hebrew: כִּי הִנְנִי מְבַשֵּׂר אֶתְכֶם שִׂמְחָה גְדוֹלָה

*Kiy hineni mevasser 'ethckhem simhah gedolah.*

Greek: ἰδοὺ γὰρ εὐαγγελίζομαι ὑμῖν χαρὰν μεγάλην.

*Idou gar evangelizomai humin charan megalen.*

Latin: **Ecce enim evangelizo vobis gaudium magnum.**

Spanish: **Porque he aqui os doy nuevas de gran gozo.**

Portuguese: **Porque eis aqui vos trago novas de grande alegria.**

French: **Car je vous apporte une bonne nouvelle.**

German: **Siehe, ich verkündige euch große Freude.**

Afrikaans: **Kyk, ek bring vir julle 'n goeie tyding van groot blydschap.**

Zulu: **Bhekani, nginibikela ukuthokoza okukhulu.**

Xhosa: **Kaloku ndinizisele iindaba ezimnandi zovuyo olukhulu.**

Sotho: **Bonang, ke le bolella molaetsa o molemo wa thabo e kgolo.**

Irish: **Óir féach, tá dea-scéala agam daoibh a chuirfidh áthas mór ar an bpobal uile.**