

Homily for the Nativity of the Lord

December 25, 2017

Readings for the Mass at dawn: Isaiah 62:11-12; Titus 3:4-7' Luke 2: 15-20

Preacher: Cathy Kamp

Songwriters for *How the Grinch Stole Christmas* first asked the question, “Where are you Christmas?” Now the song is a staple in our Christmas playlists. This Advent, my wise spiritual director gave me homework—be mindful of where I find Christmas. To illuminate his point, he shared the story of a man whose Christmas miracle was an unexpected family reconciliation.

I left my session thinking I would have to remember my homework! But I need not have worried. The question resonated with me throughout each day and I couldn't help but reflect on it in my heart. As I write this, we still have a week to go until Christmas and yet I have been blessed already with so many Christmas miracles, miracles made known to me by the coming of an infant lying in a manger.

First there was the young mother I know. Life has not treated her well. Right now, she and her toddler do not even have a permanent roof over their heads. Her situation became known to the women in my ChristLife/Discovering Christ group. Through their unquestioning, loving generosity, this mom and child still may not have long-term housing but they have the things they need to get through Christmas and this chilly winter. And her heart is touched by the warmth she has received from these women. I saw on her face a slow, grateful smile. Christmas was there.

Then there was the call my husband Greg and I received on a Friday evening. After he placed a human-interest story about a special needs child in the news media, a donor came forward and provided what the family needs most—a van! It was an amazingly generous gift and this wife is full of loving pride for her talented husband. Christmas was there, too.

The following Friday, two dedicated couples from St. Joseph's and I, along with scores of other volunteers from around the Diocese and community, gathered at Mary's Place Refugee Outreach to distribute presents to a few hundred refugee children and youth. Many of the gifts came from our Gifts of the Magi project at St. Joe's. The scene was utter chaos, utter simplicity, all at the same time. No matter what the language or cultural background, Santa evokes the same delight in children and adults alike. How special that for one evening the refugees were not the outsiders but the exclusive guests and recipients at this holiday party! Christmas was there.

And then there was a precious young man who rang up my groceries at Wegmans. He asked with great enthusiasm if I follow basketball. I didn't want to disappoint him so I admitted that I did not but said as invitingly as I could that it sounded like he did! He then told me about his high school game the night before where he scored 10 points—and even though his team lost he felt great because they played their best. When he told me about the inner-city school he attends, I was confused about how he would get to work in the suburbs. I looked into it later in the day and learned he is likely part of a program that gives underprivileged and special needs youth an opportunity to work. His sweet exuberance made my day. Christmas was there.

In each scenario, Christmas was there because the birth of Jesus reveals that God is in the most ordinary, even impoverished of circumstances. The miracle of Christmas is revealed day after day in each and every child of God we encounter, especially when we have the privilege of entering into relationship.

And so, let my spiritual homework be yours, too. Where is Christmas? Where has it been in these watchful days of Advent? How will it be revealed to you in the days ahead? The Gospel for Christmas at dawn is Luke 2: 15-20. Keep it, reflect on it in your heart as Mary would. Be amazed!

*When the angels went away from them to heaven,
the shepherds said to one another,
"Let us go, then, to Bethlehem
to see this thing that has taken place,*

*which the Lord has made known to us."
So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph,
and the infant lying in the manger.
When they saw this,
they made known the message
that had been told them about this child.
All who heard it were amazed
by what had been told them by the shepherds.
And Mary kept all these things,
reflecting on them in her heart.
Then the shepherds returned,
glorifying and praising God
for all they had heard and seen,
just as it had been told to them.*