

Homily – Christmas 2021

Fr Younis, Priest in Pakistan, sent me a beautiful WhatsApp Message earlier today for Christmas.....
“Spend the day appreciating every little thing that comes your way, and you’ll end the day feeling deeply grateful for your life”.

At Christmas the birthday of Jesus, this is a golden opportunity to say THANK YOU!
The best way we can express gratitude to God for the birth of Jesus, is to show unconditional love and celebrate kindness – The Mass is celebration of Thanksgiving. Am I a grateful person? Does showing gratitude come easily to me?

- Gratitude for what?
- For the birth of the Saviour....
- For the incarnation....
- For the redemption of humanity...
- For the Holy Family.... For my Gifts?
- For the plan of salvation...
- For the beauty of creation...
- For the birth of a baby...
- For the rising of the sun...
- For the bread of life....
- For the sanctity people who come to our aid....
- For the power of the Gospel...
- For the gift of Mass & Holy Communion...
- For the sacrifices made for our sake...
- For the presence of family...
- For the strength to come through a year of Covid...
- For so much more besides...

The prophet Isaiah expresses deep gratitude by proclaiming to God ‘You have made their gladness greater; you have made their joy increase; they rejoice in your presence as men rejoice at harvest time’.

Faith, by its nature, brings a deep sense of gratitude for our whole sense of being in the world – that I am here rather than not here!

Gratitude and Grace are sort of similar words, words that express active awareness of forces of energy at work that communicate revelation and awe of all that is going on around me.

At Christmas, we respond to the birth of Jesus, by showing love and kindness to one another, i.e., sending cards and gifts, sharing a meal and posting loving messages.

When Zechariah knew that his Son, John the Baptist was the last great prophet and would prepare a way for the Lord – He burst into song with the ‘Benedictus’. In it he exclaims, ‘To make know to his people their salvation through forgiveness of all their sins, the loving – kindness of the heart of our God who visits us like the dawn from on high’.

Perhaps, this past year, with Covid and that goes with it; what are certainly not grateful for is Covid. For restriction, lockdown and isolation, for illness, fever and fatigue + anxiety. The frenetic pace of life catapults the danger of spreading disease and virus into a new stratosphere.

We must therefore thank God for gifting humanity the skills and intelligence to fight disease and care for the sick – to reappraise what life is all about.

Our faith in Jesus inspires us to strive for the total vision of life on earth that is underlined by the salvation of souls; even to the point of sacrificing ourselves in the cause of others.

It is that perpetual gratitude for the coming of the Christ child, Jesus, in Bethlehem that inspires each of us to give of ourselves in cause of my neighbour. In the words of St Augustine, 'For what greater grace could have dawned upon us from God, that he, who had only one Son, made him the Son of mankind, and so in turn made the Son of mankind, a Son of God. Ask yourself whether this involved any merit, any motivation, any right on your part; and see whether you find anything but grace!

God Bless you all.

Thank you, from all my heart for your kindness in this parish community.

Amen.

Canon Jeremy C Bath