

Father Dave's Weekly Homily

Christmas, 2011

--*In Jesus Christ, God hits the streets!* That's perhaps the best summary of the message of the twelve readings given to us by the Church for the celebration of Christmas (in 4 different Masses).

-- That phrase is not my invention. It comes from Jim Wallis, an evangelical preacher with a passion for justice who is also the editor of *Sojourners Magazine*. God has entered into our world as a human being. This is the mystery of the Incarnation.

-- But how did God come into the world? Not as a king or emperor. The great Caesar Augustus gets a mention in Luke's gospel as does one of his local governors, but they are merely a backdrop to a baby's birth.

-- Nor does God come as a military man ready for battle, ready to overthrow the oppressive powers. God does not come as a full-grown adult ready to take on the world.

-- No, God comes into the world as a tiny child, the firstborn son of a young maiden and a worker of wood and stone. God comes to a couple on the move, with few resources to fall back upon.

-- And he is not born in a palace or even in a modest home with a midwife assisting in the birth. He is born in a smelly stable, barely protected from the outside elements.

-- Yet this is the way God's grace appears, the gift which St. Paul speaks about in the letter to Titus. God's gift to us is his Son, showing us how to reject worldly desires and live justly and temperately in our time.

-- The Christmas story is not just a story about something cute or fascinating that happened a little over 2,000 years ago. It is a story of how God continues even now to give new life to us through his Word, Jesus Christ.

-- When we say *I give you my word*, we put our personal honor and integrity on the line. We make a commitment to be faithful in doing what we've promised to do.

-- As John's gospel tells us, God gave his Word to us in Jesus Christ, who is one with him. God gave us new life, a life which lights up our lives when we receive his grace.

-- When we gaze at the Christmas scene and Jesus in the manger, we are reminded that God's grace does not come primarily in powerful events that change the world overnight. God's grace is not a lightning bolt from the sky that zaps all evil people and gives us comfort and security.

-- God's grace comes in the very ordinary things which are made extraordinary in the light of his face. God comes in events like what took place Wednesday night in our parish life center. Hundreds of people received food and gifts which they themselves could not provide through the Knights of Columbus and those assisting them.

-- That evening the line between those serving and those being served was blurred. Indeed, a few people were literally on both sides of that line. But that is, in fact, how God's grace works.

-- Yes, the grace of God has appeared, saving all and training us to reject godless ways. The Word of God has become flesh and pitched his tent among us. In Jesus Christ God has hit the streets, not only of Judea but even the streets of Wauseon, Ohio.

-- May we recognize Jesus Christ in our streets. And may you, your families and all you loved ones have a blessed and happy Christmas.