

Reflection: Christmas Eve 2014

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Homily

I bring you three tidings of great joy.

My first message to you is that Christmas will not be perfect. The wrong gifts will arrive. Items that require some assembly will be missing essential parts. Flights will be cancelled and loved ones will be late if they decide to come home at all. Nothing you do will make the tree stand precisely upright. When you finally get the tree as good as it will get, the cat will knock it over. Family and friends will not respond to your desire to do Christmas the right way this year. Be glad at this mess. We were not made to be perfect. We were made real; to be broken and mended by life and by love. We are more like the Skin Horse than the Superhero. It is in the mending and the healing and the persevering that we are real and never ever perfect.

My second message is that almost everyone and every object we embrace tonight and tomorrow will not stay the same. They will not last. Christmas Past has no hold on Christmas Present. And Christmas Present cannot foresee Christmas Future. The things we prize tomorrow will have become obsolete or lost or loved into oblivion by next year. Thus we are reminded that our happiness and satisfaction are not truly dependent on them. The people around us will not hold still either. They will grow up, grow away, grow older, or go away from us where we cannot follow. So, do not stay the passage of time and wait to express some love or delight or simple honesty. If there is a thing we can say, or a gift we can give or a star we can witness that will bring some measure of healing in that moment, then it is best not to wait until the time is right. If you can say “this is my gift to you,” if you can say “thank you,” if you can say “I miss you,” if you can say “I love you,” it is best not to wait until the time is right. The time is right now and only right now.

My last message is that, despite our imperfect and transitory natures, love, the guest, has arrived. Love is here. There is no waiting for it to appear in a blaze of glory. Love is here in the sleeping infant, in the dirt floor of the stable, in the steady regard of the child and the ancient. All we have to do is to put ourselves in that place where love is. So if you can, you be glad at

that star. It is our birthright, by virtue of being a part of this amazing creation, we have joy within us. It is our birthright that every once in a while we can respond to the terror and beauty and richness of life with quiet, all-consuming joy. Every once in a while, when we are ready to lay down this noisy world that commandeers our senses, it is ready and waiting for us to finally, finally see it. Love abides.