

Bishop Kearney Radio Talk Christmas Eve

'Fear Not... This Day Is Born To You - A Saviour!'

By REV. PATRICK J. FLYNN

CHRISTMAS IS THE ANNIVERSARY of the Birth of Christ, Our Lord. Christmas is the story of the Mystery of the Incarnation; the story of how God became man; how He entered our world wearing the frail frame of our human nature.

St. Luke's gospel records for us the thrilling message that an angel first heralded across the hills of Bethlehem on the night of Christ's birth: "Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger."

THESE GLAD TIDINGS, first spoken to lowly shepherds by heavenly heralds, proclaim a strange mystery, even a paradox. Through His entry into the world in human guise, God shared not only man's weakness in all things, except sin. He also shared in man's proudest boast, his strength to suffer.

Imagine, if there had been no Incarnation, there would have been no Calvary, no Cross. Suppose God had not become man, had never taken upon Himself the clay of Adam. Then man, God's proud creation, could claim one prerogative over the Creator—the power to weep alone in this vale of tears.

Before Christ came at Bethlehem, men and women lived in the darkness of sin, despair and sorrow. Hopelessness harassed their every step.

In this night of the ancient world, before Christ came, man could stand on the earth's rim and hurl taunts in the face of Heaven. From the darkness which enveloped him, man could scream one terrible boast: "O God, You are all-powerful. You can create worlds out of nothing and hang stars in the skies. You can hurl the fiery sun across the heavens and breathe life into dust. But there is one thing You cannot do. YOU CANNOT SUFFER."

"Weak as I am," man could taunt his God, "I rival Your Omnipotence. I can feel pain and You cannot. I can suffer and You cannot."

"My cheeks are seared with burning tears, but You cannot cry. Worries plagued me every hour, but You know no fear. My body aches, grows weary and dies. But You have no body. I alone know the tragedy of a broken heart. You have no heart. You know all things, but I alone know sorrow and feel suffering."

THIS WAS THE CHALLENGE that fallen man in his misery once could make to God. But God answered man's challenge. Sympathetic with man's misery and jealous of man's strength in sorrow, God came to earth—and He came as a man.

The birth of Christ one starry night at Bethlehem ended for all time man's bitter boast that he alone could suffer. God, as God, cannot suffer; that is why He became man. The Divine Infant born in Bethlehem came to carry a Cross.

Down from the hills came lowly Shepherds to find the world's Creator crowded into a cave. What divine mystery and even humor are in the fact, that when men found God they stumbled upon Him in a cave, even as a mother stumbles over her child sleeping behind a door.

How perfectly expressive and symbolic of all mankind's helplessness and dependence is the discovery of God in a state of human infancy; and needing the tender care of a Mother and the protection of a Father.

THE JOYOUS SONG of the Angels at Bethlehem betrays the secret joy of God Himself. Through His birth, God could see for the first time through human eyes the sadness and love on the faces of His creatures. For the first time God could raise a hand and feel the warm grasp of a Shepherd. Now God's voice could speak in human accents the story of Divine Love. Now God had a heart that beat with joy because He knew it would be broken on a Cross.

Many centuries have passed since the birth of Christ and man's strength is still tested in sorrow. We still shed tears, feel pain and suffer heartbreak. But we know that the Christ of Bethlehem and Calvary has drained the bitterest dregs of our sorrow. This fact is our hope.

In His Agony in the Garden, Christ shed all our tears. On the Cross, His body endured all our pain. All hearts were broken in His Heart, by a soldier's lance.

THE MYSTERY OF the Incarnation revealed to the world at Bethlehem, is our only hope against the world's gloomy threats and new forebodings of disaster.

"Fear not," was the first Christmas message to a world of fear. To our own world, which daily grows more fearful, the Angelic message is the only message that spells out our security.

"Fear not... this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord... Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will."

This is why Christian men everywhere, on battlefields or at home, know a secret joy and peace at Christmas time. Like the Shepherds, they have discovered the Mystery of Bethlehem's Cave. God is strong with the strength of Jesus, and men are strong with the strength of God. Christ knows our sorrow and we know Christ's love.

German Communists Restrict Christmas

Berlin — (RNS) — Communist leaders in East Germany are discouraging all public Christmas parties and observances outside the churches. It was reported here.

Religious circles said the action followed early reported attempts by Communist authorities to substitute the celebration of the birthday of Marshall Stalin on December 21 for the Christmas celebration.

Schools, kindergartens and Communist youth groups, according to these reports, were warned not to hold Christmas parties this year.

Express your sympathy with the Christmas spirit. Call RA 3194, Blanchard Street, 33 Lake Avenue, where you really get best value. Daily deliveries to all sections, including hospitals.—Adv.

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A Blessed Christmas



Midnight Mass On 7 Stations

Thousands of Catholics throughout the Diocese of Rochester will honor the birth of Christ's first Christmas with Midnight Mass on seven stations in the Diocese.

Celebration of Midnight Mass will be held at the following stations: St. John's, St. Peter's, St. Paul's, St. James, St. Joseph, St. Anthony, and St. Vincent.

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O Come Let Us Adore Him