

CHRISTMAS DAY MASS

*Isaiah 52:7-10*

*Hebrews 1:1-6*

*John 1:1-18*

**HOMILY**

**Light shining in darkness**

For the people of Israel, light and darkness were more than natural phenomena. They associated them with virtue and wickedness in the community, and also with the day of the Lord's coming. During the life-time of Jesus, light and darkness were seen as two opposing kingdoms. The sun rise over darkness was seen as victory: a symbol of the triumph of faith over the blind pursuit of evil.

Chapter one of the Bible begins the creation story with the words: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And God said, "Let there be light, and there was light." And when it was ended, "*God saw all that he had made, and indeed it was very good.*"

But this original goodness and justice became shattered at the hands of our first parents. They abused the freedom of will granted them by God and, again, as the prophet Isaiah says "*darkness came to cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples.*" (Is 60:2).

To dispel this darkness, a new creation was needed. This is what we are celebrating today at Christmas. Today, echoing the words of Isaiah, with the birth of Christ, we believe that "*The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; for those who lived in a land of deep shadow a light has shone.*" (Is 9:2).

What exactly is happening today?

It was as if God is once again saying, "*Let there be light*" – or "let the gloom and darkness, which exemplify the fallen and corrupt nature of the human race, be lifted", ushering in a new age of glory to God and peace on earth.

Mind you, we read at the night Masses of an angel of the Lord appearing to some humble shepherds tending their flocks in the enveloping darkness. We read that the brightness of the Lord shone round them and they heard the reassuring words of then angel. "*Do not be afraid, Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.*"

We too must listen; listen in the stillness of our hearts, and, like the shepherds, we must hasten, and with eagerness draw near to Christ. We must search for Christ, hasten to him with eagerness, and in the quiet times of prayer understand anew our need for Christ. You know, St Augustine propagated that prior to conceiving Christ in her womb, Mary first conceived him in her heart, by her faith.

The Church, too, is the Mother of Christ in that, by obedience to the will of God, she brings Christ into being in the world. But we, its members, are the Church, and so in some sense we too can bring Christ to birth, in this spiritual way, by doing God's holy will. This is our mission