***Christmas 2015 Mass at Dawn: A Face-to-face Encounter***

Facebook is good, but face-to-face is better.

Tweeting is quick, but relationships require more than 140 characters.

Texting gets the job done; a real live conversation is better.

Video games are cool. Getting to the 9th level of \_\_\_\_\_. Human interaction in a game with others is way better. All of this is because God lives in the face-to-face encounter. The Incarnation is a face-to-face encounter. In Jesus, God says *I like humans and I like it when humans do human things together. My glory is revealed in a human being fully alive! (St. Irenaeus.)*

What does God’s face-to-face encounter with us look like? St. Luke gives us some clues as to what to expect……

* **In a manger** King Herod has recently died and left behind the results of his ambitious building program: the Jerusalem Temple, the amphitheatre and harbor in Caesarea. He had put the Holy Land “on the map” within the Roman Empire. The local economy has been doing great to support all these building projects and the tourism that resulted. ***And they laid him in a manger…..***
* **Went up from Galilea to Bethlehem** Anybody who was anybody would be found in the Forum in Rome. Instead we get country folk, hill people going to a place that is so small it wasn’t even on maps. God seems to like out of the way and hidden places….
* **Announced by shepherds** People who were generally not trusted or highly regarded. God seems to trust those we are suspicious of…..
* **They found Mary and Joseph, and the infant in a stable** I’m pretty sure that Mary and Joseph had hoped for a better situation. God seems to do just fine when our desire to have the “perfect” Christmas is taking a different form. Jesus redeems ***this*** moment…..

St. Luke is teaching us that the Incarnation is simple, face-to-face. As the world gets more sophisticated, Jesus continues to be revealed in simplicity. God’s miracle of Incarnation happens in the intimacy of this moment, this body, this gifted place. God doesn’t need the media, texting, Tweeting, CNN, Fox News, big bank accounts, a fancy house, the Congress, YouTube, Facebook…. The Miracle can use all these media and institutions, but it doesn’t need them.

So let’s look into one another’s eyes and encounter the mystery of Incarnation.

Let us allow a smile to break through the preoccupations of our minds. Jesus reveals that a human smile is worth a 1000 emojis. Looking into someone’s eyes is a sacred gift, even if it is hard for us to do, because there we can find Christ. You see, when we are face to face, we are vulnerable. And when we’re vulnerable, God shows up!

Each wrinkle, each scar is a story of God’s presence, way more powerful than the most perfect photo-shopped internet image. Young people let us listen to our elders tell the story of their lives, for Christ is present in the telling.

Let us encounter Christ in this Eucharist and lift up our loved ones. We can’t be with everyone! In prayer we can commend them to the Holy Spirit and the Communion of Saints and the Holy Spirit. Mary covers them with her mantle. And perhaps media will help us in these situations.

In the end, Christmas heralds the primacy of personal encounter, with Christ, and with one another. This is where our lives happen! When we are open to this mystery in our family, at our workplace, while driving, yes, we are vulnerable like the baby Jesus. And the Divine Presence will radiate from our vulnerability!