

God came to us in flesh; thanks be to God! (Lk 2:11-12).

* According to the good Christian tradition, we gather at St. Luke's today for the celebration of the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ. No matter how skeptics treat this good tradition, we are not going to listen to them. No matter how their arguments seem to be good; even that the day of Jesus' birth is unknown; even that it was not practiced by the early church until the 4th century; even that it was influenced by pagan festivals held at that time; even in spite of many other reasonable arguments, we refuse them and we are not going to follow the skeptics' footsteps. Rather, we follow after the shepherds to take a glance at the place where the young Child lay; that is a good and acceptable tradition having been kept for years. As the shepherd's attitude influenced us to follow them we have been rewarded with peace upon hearing the midnight song of the angelic host, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!*, (Lk 2:14). Like these rugged shepherds we would have approached with fear and reverence to gaze from behind the screen of temporary shelter on the fulfillment of the angel's message, *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger*, (Lk 2:11-12).

* Beloved, each of us has different creativity in building mental images, especially with regard to one that applies to the mystery of God's nativity; therefore we need to ask the Lord for help in order that not one important detail of the scene was left behind. Dear Heavenly Father we ask you for mercy in giving the best of our ability to comprehend the tremendous mystery we want to direct our attention to at this moment. Also we ask you, give us again the ability to recognize Your love especially in this, that You did not spare Your only begotten Son, but deliver Him in the place of all the lost children of Adam, and hence also in my place. We render to You, dear Heavenly Father, all thanks and adoration that for my sake You have caused the Son of Your love, your only Child, to become man, that as man He might be able to suffer torture, scourging, stripes, and even death particularly for my sins, bringing satisfaction to Your offended majesty. For sake of Your Son Jesus Christ and our Lord, we pray. Amen

* And now after praying we might receive the imagery of a crude stable with its rough upright and crossed tree beams, the peasant parents and their new born baby, a donkey and a cow, the worshiping shepherds; all these are in an atmosphere that is common to a lowly station in life that is behind human reason if we understand that the baby in a manger is still the King of this world, the mighty God!!! Have you seen a problem here? Yes, we've seen the one; but the problem is not in God who decided through humiliation to glorify Himself; the problem is in the human race, (Joh 1:11). The problem that people came across with on the First Christmas and all other Christmas as well shows that many failed to realize that the baby in a manger is God Himself who became a man. He united with human flesh purposely, (Heb 2:14). It was done for us so that we have eternal life, (Rom 3:25).

* Thinking again over Christmas traditions there was one popular in this country and Canada. Usually on Christmas Eve, groups of children walked from house to house and sang Christmas carols. Some people gave

the singers money or small gifts or invited them in for a warm drink. Significantly, the same thing was practiced by the Reformer M. Luther when he was a boy. As his biography says, because of the Luther's poverty, young Martine sometimes literally had to sing for his supper; and doing so he was successful by virtue of his talent to sing carols and other popular songs. Certainly at Christmas Eve, he was not left without food or money, likewise any person who follows the good Christian tradition. As well as we know besides the talent to sing Luther also had talent to understand the Scriptures. All at once the Holy Spirit opened his mind to grasp the truth of salvation through faith alone in Christ Jesus. In connection with the mystery of incarnation and the salvation by faith alone, Luther taught that these things could not be comprehended by human intellect but believed. In other words, in order to believe a person doesn't need to understand the mysterious nature of God-man, otherwise such a person can be compared with a fisherman who attempts to catch crocodiles with a tiny hook, (Job 41:1), or, as Luther says, to seek to illuminate the sun with a candle.

* As far as I remember, the last time, when I talked on the account of God's nature, was the Sunday of the Holy Trinity. In my sermon I noted, that we should not wonder at the fact that many people failed to understand Trinity, rather we might wonder that we were given to believe in Trinity. In connection with this remark, I recall a story. Here it is. Once upon a time St. Augustine was walking on the beach thinking over the mystery of God's nature. Suddenly he saw a boy who had dug a hole in the sand and then moved fast to the sea for water. He did such a *trip for biscuits* many times. After a while, St. Augustine asked that boy, "What are you doing?" "I'm going to pour the entire ocean into this hole," said the boy. "That is impossible," exclaimed the theologian, "full ocean will not fit in the hole you have made. The boy replied, *by the same token you also cannot fit the mysterious God in your tiny little brain.* The story concludes by saying that the boy vanished, as St. Augustine had been talking to an angel. This story can be applied to all humanity in attempting to grasp the mysterious God who instead of understanding His sacred nature prefers to being believed. At this point we ought to say with the ancient church father, "I believe in order that I may understand," or, as Luther said, "It requires faith just because it goes beyond our reason."

* Returning to the imagery of the newborn King laying in a manger and to the remark on account of His inconceivable nature, I ask you a rhetorical question. Is it ever God's purpose so that we believe in Him whom we cannot understand in full? Certainly, there are at least several purposes and the greatest of all is that we love the newborn King as He loves us. This truth shall connect with our daily life and get into action as a response to God's love powering in our hearts through faith in Christ Jesus. *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* It is ever God's purpose that earthly became heavenly and mortal turns into immortal; that is why Christ came to this world. In return, He wants that we love Him and his flock. Regarding the incorrect interpretation how to love our God Jesus Christ whom we cannot understand in full and how we need to love his church the apostle Paul gives us the instruction, *I beseech you, therefore brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. And be not conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,*

that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. (Rom 12:1-2). Now it is quite clear, God came to us in the flesh to make us as He is. First, the fullness of this mystery took place in Christ Jesus; and second, it will take place in those who keep on faith in Christ Jesus. Significantly, the process of our reshaping is in a progress, now is the favorable time for changing until Christ's coming. In response the God's people say, Come Lord Jesus! Amen.

Beloved the peace that is beyond our understanding be with us always.

Amen