



IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, ONE GOD. AMEN.

My Beloved, Priests, Deacons, Servants, Members of Church Committees, and all the Congregation, my sincerest congratulations to you all for this Glorious Feast of the Nativity, on which we celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ and the mystery of His Incarnation.

Tonight, let us heed the instruction given by the great church father, St. John Chrysostom, who writes in his "Homily on Christmas Morning":

Come, then, let us observe the Feast...For this day the ancient slavery is ended, the devil confounded, the demons take to flight, the power of death is broken, paradise is unlocked, the curse is taken away, sin is removed from us, error-driven out, truth has been brought back...and a heavenly way of life has been implanted on the earth. Why is this? Because God is now on earth, and man in heaven; on every side all things commingle. He became Flesh!

For this reason, let us rejoice with great joy! Because "God is now on earth and man in heaven." All things commingle through Christ's Incarnation and heaven has come down to us on earth. Because the King of heaven has taken flesh and made His dwelling among us!

A mystery so great that even Solomon the wise once asked:

"But will God indeed dwell with men on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You." 2 Chronicles 6:18

To that question, the angel of the Book of Revelation responds:

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God." Revelation 21:3

But with that said, some might look at their life here on earth and wonder: if God is truly with us, how come I can't feel His Presence? How come I feel so alone? How come there's so much pain and evil and suffering? If He is "God with us," how come it's so hard to find Him when I need Him?

If you've ever struggled with any of those thoughts, take heart. You are not alone. Many great men and women of faith have struggled with doubts and overcome them through the grace of God and through their diligent striving. Let us, therefore not lose heart but rather let us start by praying, **"Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" Mark 9:24**

Secondly let us learn a lesson from the wise men whom we just read about in this evening's gospel. They were among the first to find the Child Jesus and experience His Presence tangibly



on this earth. Like many of us, they asked, **“Where is He who has been born King of the Jews?”**
Matthew 2:2

And as we know, God rewarded them by allowing them to be among the first to see the Child Jesus on this earth.

Let us therefore meditate upon these wise men and see what lessons we can learn about finding God here on earth. The first lesson is that we find God through WORSHIP.

“For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.” Matthew 2:2

The wise men had a clear purpose in their search: to worship the King. They weren't coming to make requests, or to persuade Him to their point of view, or simply to take a blessing and go home. They came to lay their lives down in front of Him and worship Him.

Let us ask ourselves if we approach God the same way. Do we approach the House of God on Sunday mornings the same way the wise men approached the manger this night – coming to worship the King who dwells therein? I fear my beloved, that too often we lose sight of this primary purpose and instead we fixate upon our requests and the many things we want God to do for us. Or we come to the church distracted and seeking only a “blessing” without ever entering true and authentic worship.

If my beloved, we genuinely desire to find God, it begins by coming to Him with an attitude of worship.

If you find yourself struggling with this, remember the words of St. John Chrysostom as he reminds us of what we find when we come to church:

“We receive within us the same body of our Lord Christ that was born in the manger of Bethlehem, the same body that walked on the sea of Galilee, the same body that was crucified on Calvary, the same body that was resurrected from the tomb, the same body that ascended into heaven and now sits on the right hand of the Father. There is no power in life greater than this.” St. John Chrysostom

So the first lesson is that we find God through WORSHIP.

The second lesson is that we find God through SCRIPTURE.

When the wise men came to Herod, he was troubled at the thought of another king and he gathered the religious experts to inquire where the Christ would be born.



“So they said to him, “In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.’” Matthew 2:5-6

“Thus it is written...” God is not hiding from man. His greatest desire is to unite with us and He offers us a means to do so through His written Word. Those who cling to His Word and commit themselves to it will find Him; while those who neglect His Word will struggle to feel His Presence.

Observe the instruction given to Joshua after the death of Moses – when he was feeling alone and overwhelmed at the task ahead of him:

“This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.” Joshua 1:8

The command is clear: do not let this Book of Law depart from your mouth. Meditate in it day and night. The result of that command comes in the next verse:

“Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” Joshua 1:9

There is a direct correlation between our commitment to God’s Word and our experience of God’s Presence. We must not be satisfied with simply hearing the Scriptures read to us in church on Sundays. Rather we must commit to making God’s Word a daily part of our lives: reading it, studying it, memorizing it, meditating upon it and most importantly, obeying it.

So the first lesson is that we find God through WORSHIP. The second is that we find God through SCRIPTURE. The final lesson is that we find God through SACRIFICE.

“And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” Matthew 2:11

They did not come empty handed. They came offering gifts – precious gifts that cost them much.

The world teaches us to approach life with a consumeristic mindset. We are taught to ask, “what’s in it for me?” But we cannot allow this mindset to seep into our spiritual lives. We – like the wise men – must come to God with offerings in hand, willing to sacrifice our time and our money and our entire lives for His sake.

“And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.” Exodus 34:20



So tonight, as we celebrate the Supreme Essence and His coming to us on earth, let us know with full assurance that God IS with us. No matter what our eyes may see or what our emotions may feel, let us be assured that He IS Immanuel, God with us. And because of His Incarnation we are never alone. We are never without help. We are never without hope. We are never without God ever again!

As we approach the new year, let us commit ourselves to seek Him and finding Him through worship, through Scripture, and through sacrifice. And if we do that, I trust that we will experience what St. Paul says in Hebrews 11:6, that **“He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.”**

May God bless you all, and may He fill your lives with His Divine Presence in the coming year. Through the intercessions of the Mother of Light, St. Mary, and through the prayers of the blessed elder, St. Joseph the carpenter, and through the prayers of our holy Father and Shepherd, His Holiness Pope Tawadros II, Merry Christmas to you all.

Bishop Peter

Bishop, Diocese of North, South Carolina & Kentucky
And Papal Vicar of the Churches of Virginia