

## Christmas Day C

“Let’s go now to Bethlehem and see this thing...” Luke 2:15

The story is told of Teddy Roosevelt entertaining guests at his Sagamore Hill estate on Long Island. After a late dinner he invited his guests outside to walk beneath the brilliant nighttime sky. After a silent, reverent stroll Roosevelt said,

"I guess we've been humbled enough now. Let's go inside." And that's what Christmas Day says to me – it takes me from earth to the infinite connecting me with my finiteness.

So in response to the angel chorus and the angel announcement, the simple, rustic, stargazing shepherds said, "Let us go even now into Bethlehem to see this thing that has happened...." And they went inside the stable, and beheld in the manger the inner galaxy -- the interior meaning of the universe. And what did they experience?

Luke tells us they returned "glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen...."

The shepherds hear the gospel proclamation of heaven: A savior, who is Christ the Lord has been born to you this day in nearby Bethlehem, the city of David.

A sign is given that is one unlike any would have expected for the Son of God. The sign of a child wrapped in bands of cloth lying in a food crib and it reaffirms:

- there is a God who is with us!
- there is a God whose presence in a child purposefully goes unnoticed! (Identifies with the lowly instead of the powerful)
- God is both almighty yet near enough to come and live among us.

It’s as if heaven were telling the shepherds, “I will not let you think that in some rare place and privilege, life will achieve its infinite fulfillment. Here in a lowly place, here in the most ordinary spot on earth, I came to dwell with you. Here and not elsewhere is Emmanuel.”

It was in this vein, dwelling with common people, shepherds, fisherman, tax collectors, mothers and fathers, farmers and simple laborers, that Christ would show the world his humanity and goodness. If Jesus life entered this world through a little door, so also it was through little doors that he would go in and out. By such a little door he enters our hearts.

That the shepherds had not just witnessed some cosmic spectacle common to their outdoor profession: a shooting star, a comet, or a supernova, is proven by their reaction.

It was not merely, "Let's just check this out after the flocks are fed," but "Let's get their before someone else does!"

They went with haste (as they fed their flocks that night they too would have their souls fed).

They found Mary and Joseph and the child as told. That's all they needed to see. There were no cosmic fireworks. Perhaps today it's so hard for us in 2007 to get very excited about yet another Nativity story. There are no high "tech" wonders to behold. There was no glowing radiate light coming from Jesus face and the halos painted by the great artists of the world around the heads of the holy family. Those halos were just NOT THERE! Their sight of the child was enough to fill a lifetime of memories. The angelic visitors were right! Their haste was rewarded with faith that the Lord had come. They were witnesses to the truth.

What are we to do with the story so old we know it by heart? With Mary let us ponder and treasure what we hear.

Let us "sit" with the truth, think over events, and experience their impact on our lives.

Some say we should wonder as well and let our wonderments renew our faith and hope in the glory of his life. In the birth of a baby whose short life brings us eternal promise, may we reopen the gift of love proclaiming his glory for all people. AMEN.