

Holy Family Catholic Church  
16 Orange Avenue  
Natchez, MS 39120

December 21, 2007

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

As I reflect on the story of God's intervention in human history and the virginal birth of a savior, one of the things that catch my attention is the amount of fear that might have overshadowed Joseph and Mary, the parents of the child, Jesus. According to the biblical stories, fear gripped both Mary and Joseph from the moment the story about their child's birth was announced. Traditional stories about Christmas do not tell us about the fear and uncertainties that the Holy Family faced from the conception to the death of their child Jesus. But when we read and reflect on the biblical writings, we get an insight into the struggles the family went through.

And gain, throughout Scripture fear and uncertainties are very much prevalent. Each time God sensed that the people were afraid He gave them the cure that enabled them to deal with whatever the fear might be. Either God or his messenger would give the assurance, "Fear not" or "Do not be afraid" (Gen 15:1; Daniel 10:12; Luke 1:13; Luke 1:12, 30; Luke 2:10; Mk 8:50; Mt 17:7 and Mt 28:5).

In all such circumstances through out the Bible, the people, like us today, had valid reasons to be afraid. But those words from God: "Fear not" or "Do not be afraid" gave them and still gives us the ability to face the tragedies of war, sicknesses, trails and tribulations. For God, believers are not to live in fear or allow fear to stifle their spirits and down their hopes. This is because through it all, within it all and despites it all, **He is the Immanuel (God is with us)**.

Today we celebrate the fulfillment of the promise that God gave to Ahaz who was afraid to ask for help from God. As 1 John 4:18 tells us Jesus, the perfect love casts out fear. This ultimate act of fearlessness demonstrates the trust that God had in human beings such that He willed his Son to be born of a young woman into our world of pain and struggle, suffering and dying. Joseph and Mary also trusted in the words spoken to them by the angel of God in spite of their fears.

So, Christmas is the time to listen to and hear the voice of God telling us, "Do not be afraid, trust me for I am with you" even as we too acknowledge our fears and anxieties.

We, therefore, join the angels today in singing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth ... peace" as we hear them say to us "Do not be afraid; I proclaim good news of great joy".

Merry Christmas and a happy and prosperous new year to each and every one of you.

Yours faithfully,

Rev. Michael Saah-Buckman, SSJ  
Pastor.