



Archdiocese of San Antonio
Most Rev. Gustavo García-Siller



Midnight Mass

December 25, 2014

God is full of surprises, and the biblical story of Christmas – while very familiar to us – is full of surprises. We just heard about a young couple who are temporarily homeless when it is time for the woman to bear a child. There is no room in the inn at Bethlehem, so they have to find a place – a poor, dirty place – for the wondrous event. The powerful Word of God comes into the world as a helpless baby who cannot talk. His first crib is a trough used to feed animals. Jesus, who will feed the multitudes – and the whole world – with his body and blood – lies in a manger, a place for food – and the baby cannot feed himself! Later he will open his arms on the cross to embrace the whole world, but today baby Jesus needs us to care for him!

Yes, God has become human in a most surprising way. The Prince of Peace, Christ the King, is indistinguishable from any other poor baby born to parents without a home or even a nice room of their own. What a contrast between the majesty of God, the Creator of stars and seas, with that most vulnerable of beings – a newborn child!

The surprises continue. Choirs of angels announce the birth to shepherds, who were among the poorest of God's people. They are the first to learn that a Savior has been born – not in a rich palace where we would expect a royal Messiah, a Son of David – but in a lowly, humble stable. In faith the shepherds go to greet the Savior who turns out to be a little baby exactly like their own young children. God is full of surprises. Consider also to whom salvation is promised just before Jesus' death on Calvary – to a thief who is crucified with him! God is truly full of surprises.

God did not send his Son into a perfect world, an ideal situation, a comfortable life. God sent his Son into a flawed, sinful world, to live among flawed, sinful people. But he loved them unconditionally, and he loves us with all our goodness and all our shortcomings.

That is perhaps the greatest surprise of all – and the greatest gift we can ever receive at Christmas -- God's enduring love for each of us. Our hearts are touched by the surprising beauty, the immense love, the trusting vulnerability of God who comes to us as a child, who touches something very tender and welcoming, deep within our hearts. This is truly a wondrous event – here and now!

Today, God gives us another gift -- the gift of faith which allows us to see persons and events as God sees them – with God's eyes. Today, he calls us to see this Child, this holy Child, this divine Child, in the faces of the millions of young, vulnerable children and the not so young – who are homeless or who live in unfit dwellings, who are threatened daily by violence, who are hunted or persecuted, who fear the deportation or separation from their parents, who are lonely, abused, neglected,

rejected. God calls us to reach out to them again and again with the love that he pours into our hearts. My dear sisters and brothers, that is how we keep the Feast of Christmas alive throughout the year.

Let us draw near to the Holy Family this holy night, approaching them with the poor shepherds in awe and wonder at the surprises God continually sends us. A blessed Christmas to all of you!