

# **Christmas Homily 2016**

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On Christmas Eve, 1968, the crew of Apollo 8 spacecraft were orbiting 250,000 miles above the earth. In honor of the auspicious occasion of celebrating the birth of Christ they decided to read from the book of Genesis. Looking down on our tiny planet they read, "In the beginning, God made the heavens and the earth. This powerful truth was broadcast live over all the earth. God is creator of all life. Even back then, NASA was sued by atheists for allowing such a thing. They would have gone absolutely ballistic if they had known that just a few months later, Buzz Aldrin took Holy Communion with him to the moon and partook of it in the lunar modular while he read Sacred Scripture, "I am the vine you are the branches, whoever abides in me will bring forth much fruit."

Tonight we are able to broadcast loud and clear the Christmas message of Hope, Today in the city of David a Savior has been born for you, who is Christ the Lord". The great gift of Christmas. God himself, becoming one like us in all things but sin. What is it that we are celebrating? A gift so profound that it can never be fully explained. Ultimately it is pure gift. Not just a present that is here today and gone tomorrow. Not merely a gesture of love. It is a grace that keeps on giving. God has become man in order for us to become like God. Our all-powerful creator wants you and me to be like him. Impossible you say. Do not forget the message of the Angel; "All things are possible with God." Let the non-believers have their lawsuits we have the Christ and with Christ everything is a possibility.

What is God's motive in being so generous with us? Christmas is the pure gift of love. God has no ulterior motive, no hidden agenda. He loves us and wants us to be like him. As the priest says at each mass, God humbles himself to become one like us in our humanity that we might become one with him in his Divinity. **The child of Bethlehem is the means to this end.** Christ, our Redeemer has saved us from everlasting death so that we have the opportunity to live with him forever. I know it sounds unbelievable. We have heard the words so often that we are sometimes numb to their significance. The burdens of our lives can blind us to the reality of the Christmas message. The terror and inhumanity of man can prevent us from experience the joy of the gift. In spite of the human condition, here we are, once again proclaiming the Gospel message, God has become Man. The good news never changes. Our response to the message must be the element of continuous change. Our continuous growth in holiness is the key to celebrating Christmas every day of our lives. Every prayer that we offer, every loving action in which we partake enables the light of Christ to burn more brightly in our lives and in the lives of those we touch.

The great Italian poet, Dante said that Christ is "Love that moves the Sun and other stars". Our American astronauts had a unique vision of this spectacular Creation. Like them we have God's Word, Jesus Christ, who is the Word become flesh and has made his dwelling among us. Now my brothers and sisters in Christ it is up to us to move the heavens and the earth by allowing Christ to reign over us and permit our bodies to be His dwelling place. My Christmas prayer for you is that the peace, joy and love the infant babe of Bethlehem brings will enable you to continually grow in his image. That he will strengthen you in your resolve to live as his son or daughter. That he will imbue with the wisdom to make right decisions and that you will have the courage to act upon your convictions. Let us never cease giving thanks to God: "for his unspeakable love". A very Merry Christmas to all.