

## Christmas 2016 – Mass During the Day

In a culturally diverse country like the U.S. we have a lot of different stories to choose from when it comes to talking about the fight between good and evil:

- we can project that fight into the future, with death stars and Jedi knights and storm troopers,
- we can take a page from mythology, whether that's Norse or Greek, and see the ongoing dynamic play out there,
- we can find our heroes in people with special powers or coming from another planet,
- maybe even robots will have a part to play.

And then, of course, at each Mass we celebrate our belief that it is Christ's suffering, death and resurrection that provide us with the true victory over evil.

The Mass of Christmas Day, though, really provides another, deeper and more profound focus for our reflection: before even the reality of evil and sin and death, our story begins.

It begins with the eternal love of God for his Only Begotten Son, the Word of God, through whom God creates all that is.

On Christmas we celebrate God's intention, from before the world began, that this same Word, would share in the life of the human race, not

as a visitor from another planet, or as a mythological creature who saves humanity from the outside, but as one who shares our very nature, our very humanity in all its particularity and vulnerability.

Because we are so accustomed to thinking about the fight of good against evil, it's easy to collapse that eternal intention of God into that very present, very concrete drama.

That gets played out and made present again especially in the events of Holy Week and Easter.

Christmas, however, is the pre-eminent occasion in the Church's year in which we are invited to ponder what it means to have a God who, from the beginning and by the very way he designed us as human beings, makes it clear that He wants to be with us, to be a part of our lives, and to welcome us into his life in the midst of the Trinity.

True, we have botched a lot of our history by going our own way and forgetting our dignity as receivers of God's Son,

and much of our time and effort is taken up in dealing with the consequences.

But today, on the day when we are most inclined to come to Church and be reminded of the Good News that has been proclaimed to us,

## Christmas 2016 – Mass During the Day

we have nothing to do but to rejoice in a God who loves us, not because he has to, to keep the whole thing from falling apart once and for all,

but because that's how He has been all along, from all eternity, from before even the big bang.

He has wanted to be with us from the very beginning.

That's a lot to take in. We'll never get to the bottom of so great a mystery.

But we can give ourselves a chance to ponder it, perhaps this evening, when all the partying is over, and we sit in the dark with nothing but the lights of the Christmas tree to provide a point of focus.

Who knows what will come of such a moment of simple awe. Good things, no doubt. Things that will reflect the design and desire of God that we be in communion with him, as cherished members of God's own family.