

Church of the Good Shepherd
and
St. John the Evangelist

Christmas Eve
December 24, 2005
10:00 pm
Fr Bill McGinty

“We Have a Story to Tell!”

Tonight is a night for star gazing. Tonight is a night for looking to the heavens. Tonight is a night for contemplating the awesome majesty and the dimensions of the universe. When we do, we are overwhelmed by the might and power of our God.

On Friday a parishioner said to me: “the sheer power of my God overwhelms me. It is so awesome it reduces me to tears.”

All this is true, yet it is not the power of our God that speaks to us this night, but the love of our God. For tonight he breaks our hearts, not with awesome power, but with the tenderness of a little baby. How like our God to show us himself in the least threatening way. God comes among us and wins our hearts on this night and we want to gather like those poor hapless shepherds; we want to gather and come to gaze upon him.

Two thousand years after the event, the child, the stable and the story of Jesus’ birth still hold great meaning for each of us. It reminds us, like nothing else can, what we as Christians are meant to be about, for we are people with a story. It is a story that we must never, ever tire of telling. It is the story of Bethlehem and how Christ came to us in the bare naked poverty of a farmyard setting, to remind us that stripped of our earthly trappings we are but children of God. What we are to become will depend on the road each of us decides to take in life.

We can choose to follow the life of this child and make the values and teachings he brings to the world our own. We can reach for a life of the Spirit that calls for a deep faith and make miracles, prayer and healing an everyday part of our existence.

We can even go much further than that and become Kingdom Christians.

Kingdom Christians know about Jesus teaching, they know about his promises of salvation, they know how churches love to say “follow us to Heaven.”

Kingdom Christians run ahead of themselves. They want and attempt to build Christ’s Kingdom of Heaven, right here, right now and for real. They will not wait, but they embrace fellowship; they make the Beatitudes come alive; they reach out and touch others with the healing salvation of their Christ.

Money is not their concern, telling Christ’s Story is. They already have the wealth of the Holy Spirit and it is the gifts of the Spirit that empowers them for what is to come.

Kingdom Christians are people who have walked in darkness and seen a great light. Just as

The Rev. William J. McGinty, Rector
110 West Catharine Street, Milford, Pennsylvania 18337
Phone: (570) 296-8123 ♦ Fax: (570) 296-4383

Church of the Good Shepherd

and

St. John the Evangelist

tonight's first reading told us. That light is the light of God's revelation, that light is the light of truth in their life. Tonight as they gather round the manger, their thoughts, our thoughts, are full of gratitude for the gift of God that we have received. But more, we are already thinking to ourselves: "How can we tell this story more effectively in the year to come?"

For this is not some C. S. Lewis fable, this is not a Han Christian Anderson fairy tale, this is a Cosmic event, about good and evil, and it poses us with a question on this night.

Will we champion this defenseless little child and all that he stands for? Will we commit ourselves to all children in poverty and peril in the coming year? Will the words we say tonight, gathered around the crib be: "I believe"? Will they sustain us for the whole of the year to come?

Others may mock our faith, laugh at our story of stars and angels, sneer at this scene of Christ's birth in humble circumstances.

But you and I are not laughing. You and I are not doubting. For in the year that has gone we have seen miracles. We have seen the work of the Spirit in our midst. We have experienced, and continue to experience healings. And we, you and I have been in the presence of angels and continue to be helped by angels: Lillian, Mary, Nancy, and so many others.

Tonight as one Christian family we give thanks to God that he came among us and he remained with us the whole year, through the presence of this Holy Spirit undeterred by pettiness, sickness, or the impossible. For our Christ is the one who makes things possible to those who bow to his name.

With gratitude and courage we pray tonight for all the families of the parish. Christ led you here to experience his love and to tell his story in your life. May he bless you this Christmas and in the coming year.

And with gratitude to God we thank him and pray for Franklyn, Munn, Eileen, Karl, Richard, Paul, Pat, Irene, Muriel, Al, June, and Barbara. We pray that his healing Spirit may continue to bring them comfort and wholeness.

And we pray for Mary, Lillian, Jacqueline, Nanci and Marguerite, all who now share the glory of Christ's salvation with our heavenly Father. To all of you Peace, Love and every blessing this Christmas to you and your family.

Amen+

The Rev. William J. McGinty, Rector
110 West Catharine Street, Milford, Pennsylvania 18337
Phone: (570) 296-8123 ♦ Fax: (570) 296-4383