

The Vigil of Christmas

December 24, 2007

4:00 PM Liturgy

Rev. Andrew A. Czajkowski

*St. John the Evangelist Parish
Davison, Michigan*

Prelude

We warmly welcome all who have come today to celebrate this glorious Feast.

We welcome the stranger, the traveler and guest!

We welcome our students home from college for a good winter's rest!

We welcome parishioners who moved far away but join us today as old friends and guests!

We welcome all who have not been active of late in their Catholic faith and hope they will find new hope and inspiration this Christmas to come back again and again!

We welcome our faithful parishioners, loyal and true; may the Lord bless you for all you do!

Welcome to all! May our gathering this day gladden our hearts and deepen our bonds. We are, after all, one People of God, redeemed by the Light.

May we walk by the Light and live by the Light, together in love.

Christmas Blessings!

HOMILY

After only a week of married life, a young husband had to leave his wife to fight in the war. Though they were over a half-world apart in distance, they frequently exchanged e-mails. He would send her a gift to remind her of his love. Then one night there was a sudden and unexpected knock on her door. Cautiously, she opened it and, to her amazement, there stood her soldier-husband. On his face was a grin that extended ear to ear. They ran into each other's arms and laughed and cried with the joy of reunion.

In times past, God has been sending words and gifts of love to his children. In various ways, through priests and prophets, God has been sending messages of love and truth. Continually, God has been sending gifts to us. But on Christmas night, God knocks on the door of humankind and presents himself as a person, a God with a human face. How the world needs this knock on our door . . .

- ✦ ***This Christmas***, when families know the stress of job loss, or the divisive potential of competing demands for limited time and resources.
- ✦ ***This Christmas***, when ethnic and religious differences account for the torture, rape and murder of thousands in the Middle East and far too many places in our world.
- ✦ ***This Christmas***, when many in our midst know an echoing emptiness in their lives, a loneliness due to loss—loss of a life or loss of a love—and wonder why God allows this to happen and how they can possibly go on.
- ✦ ***This year***, when many are not at one with themselves, their families, their friends, their employers, their church or even their God, we need good news of great joy for all the people.
- ✦ ***More than that***, we need the very one whose birth the angels announced. For in him, God and mortals are at last one...at one with each other and at one with themselves.

In the original hit movie, “Home Alone,” a little boy named Kevin is accidentally left behind when his family leaves for a European vacation. On Christmas Eve, Kevin begins to feel sad and lonely, so he goes to church. There he meets an older man who is also unhappy because of family problems. As they engage in conversation, young Kevin admits that he feels guilty because he knows that he

didn't always treat his family right. But now he misses them terribly. "Well," says the older man, "you're in church now and this is the place to come when you feel bad about yourself."

He was right, wasn't he? The Church, which exists because of Christmas, is indeed the place to come when we need comfort, when we need forgiveness, when we need to make a new start, when we need peace for our troubled souls. It is here that we meet Jesus. This Christ of Christmas is our personal savior because there is a hole in our souls that only he can fill. Remember how Saint Augustine put it: "Our hearts are restless, O Lord, until they find rest in Thee." A poet described it like this: "Though Christ a thousand times be born, if he is not born in you, your soul is all forlorn."

One of my favorite pictures is the picture of Jesus standing in the garden knocking on a door of a home. Upon closer inspection, there is no doorknob on the door. The door can only be opened from within by the person who lives in the home. Like the soldier husband who stood knocking on the door of the one he so loved, so, too, our God stands before you and me on this holy night knocking on our door—the door to our hearts. Will you let him in? He so wants to be a real part of you!