

Second Hand Preacher

Christmas

December 25, 2014

Titus 2:11-14 and 3:4-7

“Behold, the virgin shall bear a Son and call him Emmanuel meaning God is with us.” The Christmas celebration has four sets of Mass readings including the Vigil Mass, Mass at Midnight, Mass at Dawn, and Mass during the Day. The vigil and day have Acts and Hebrews respectfully and I just don’t use these very often. Most commonly at Christmas I take the Midnight and Dawn readings that have Gospels from Luke and are a more common Christmas message that people are used to hearing. Both masses feature second readings from St. Paul’s relatively short letter to Titus. I find this slightly strange as Paul is writing to Titus who is organizing the Christians of Island of Crete.

Titus traveled with Paul and now appears to be settling down to do pastoral work in Crete. The letter has three parts. There is an Introductory Address (1:1-4), a Pastoral Charge (1:5-16), and the rest of the letter is on teaching the Christian life where these passages are taken. Both passages speak of a God who appears saving all. The first one in chapter 2 talks about the hope of our Savior Jesus Christ. There is a reference to baptism as it alludes to Jesus cleansing his people. There is a real uplifting tone. The second passage in chapter 3 speaks also of an appearance, but this time stressing mercy and the saving act. There is a more direct mention of baptism when Paul speaks of the bath of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.

These readings tie the once birth of a Savior to the many rebirth by water and the Holy Spirit that is open to all of us. We are the Gentiles that Paul and Titus served. We are included in the saving act that Jesus did for us once and for all. We witness to the birth every year because it is a necessary part of our salvation. So “Hail the new born King.” May the Christmas Spirit bring you into a closer relationship with Jesus.