

The Fulfillment of God's Promise

Fessahaye Mebrahtu

The church sets different liturgical seasons preparing us to celebrate a particular event in our history of salvation. The Season of Advent prepares us for Christmas, the birth of Jesus, the Savior. Therefore, the time of waiting for the promise of the Lord to be fulfilled, we are to be in the mode of active anticipations, entailing spiritual preparation. However, the meaning and purpose of such spiritual expectation evolved into commercial materialism, diluting the true meaning of Christmas, celebrating God who chose to dwell among us.

The scripture readings for Christmas are rich and many, for example, the Christmas Vigil Mass narrates the genealogy of Jesus, starting from Abraham, the father of nations to Joseph, the son of Jacob, the husband of Mary. Matthew describes the circumstances of Jesus' birth because it seems out of norm, bothering Joseph that child Mary was expecting could not be his, but he was assured in a dream that Mary's pregnancy is the work of the Holy Spirit. Matthew throws us back to Joseph the son of Jacob, the dreamer boy and we are reminded Joseph, the husband of Mary and father of Jesus is also a dreamer, and acts upon the revelation in his dreams.

In our salvation history, God works in cyclical and linear way, and the fulfillment of God's promise moves in a linear. The Christmas Night Mass first reading from Isaiah says, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone." Here we notice the intersectionality of cultural practice, which the Romans celebrated December 25th the beginning of more sunlight and the church gave it theological meaning Christ our light is born. Luke explaining on how the lowly shepherds received the good news, "The angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them." Joseph in his dreams and the shepherds are told, "Do not be afraid" to be calm and savor the moment the Lord has made by revealing his glory through the birth of the Savior. In our lives, when confronted with challenges, God tells us "Not to be afraid" so we can allow God to be on the driver's seat by letting God to be God. By doing that we can sing, "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests."

The reading of Christmas Day helps us to reflect on the response of the shepherds, the first believers, "Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." The shepherds spread the excitement of their experience to all those who can hear and listen to them. Mary,

who believed and said yes to the annunciation of Angel Gabriel to accept the Son of God in her womb, upon his birth St. Luke writes, “And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart.” We read Mary’s reflective disposition throughout the Gospel narrative. As we celebrate Christmas, are we preoccupied with material gifts, under the Christmas Tree or about the greatest gift of God, his only Son to be born in our hearts so that we can join “people of good will to bring peace the world” still wallowing in the darkness of war, hate, violence, etc. God has shone his light on us, but it is upon us to choose the path God’s light is shining on.

Merry Christmas