

December 24, 2024,
Christmas Eve at St. Michael's Church
The Reverend Joshua Wong

Let us pray:

*Almighty God, who has poured upon us the new light of your Incarnate Word;
Grant that the same light enkindled in our hearts may shine forth in our lives
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

Happy Christmas Eve everyone.

Tonight we gather together in peace to await the birth of Jesus Christ. We gather in peace to follow the shining light, the bright stars on this unusual night. As we gather here, we are blessed with an evening of peace, but we recognize that not everyone finds peace tonight. There are people in war zones, and in gangs not far from us. There are people in hospital beds and in homeless shelters not far from us. We even have people close to our church who are in broken and in painful relationships. And in our own country, we are experiencing division and fear of an unknown future. At the time of Jesus' birth, the world was also filled with the same afflictions, darkness and pain we are experiencing today.

Then came Jesus' light.

Just a few days ago on the fourth Sunday of Advent, we read the Magnificat, the prophetic song of the Mother of Jesus. Mary was the first prophet of the New Testament, who, decades before either her nephew John the Baptist or her son Jesus, proclaimed the Kingdom of God. In the opening pages of Luke's gospel, she announced the entire theological vision and purpose of God's coming reign — the promise she carried in her own womb, the light of the world.

In her Magnificat, she says, "His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm; he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts. He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever."

Theologian Diane Butler Bass speaks of the light of Christ so eloquently in her Blog "The Cottage." She said, "Jesus didn't come into the world to save individuals from their personal sins or get anybody to heaven, but Jesus was born to defeat the powers and principalities that had set themselves up as gods — and who established their kingdoms and empires in place of the Dream of God. Jesus came into the world to bring peace. Peace on earth means casting off every Caesar, every Herod, every Caligula, every Ivan the Terrible, every Hitler, every Putin, and every oligarch in our modern world. Peace on earth

means an end to their schemes. The people of Biblical times were under these oppressors, and the prophetic song of the Mother of Jesus ringed hope for these people and God's promise of justice prevailed then and will prevail today.

Hence, it is at this hope of light that we remember the timely message of Advent. Not just a sweet baby. We await a baby born who would finally and fully shatter the illusions of greed, violence, and domination. God With Us. The One who brings justice and joy. *Peace and good will*, not retribution and evil intent.

Christmas is not A day on our calendar, but a reminder to anticipate Christ. A threefold anticipation, first in the coming of his birth in Bethlehem; then every time we come to the Eucharistic Table; and lastly when Christ returns to restore a new heaven and a new earth.

Christmas is our promise of hope, joy, love and peace for our present world and for the future world. Christmas insists that the powers today who claim their power to be more than our mighty God will be defeated.

Every Christmas eve, the light of Christ guides us to His promise and His hope. A light that heals all the brokenness from injustice, poverty, sickness and pain.

During the year, let us be the Christ-light to the world that needs to see the love of Jesus.

The Mother preached it before her son was born. These days, Mary's prophetic words of hope and justice have never rung so true. They are good news indeed.

And trust her — because Mom is always right.

May God's light shine on your path and bring you hope everyday. Merry Christmas.