

Jesus Is Near At Hand

Mic. 5: 2-5a; Ps. 80; Heb. 10: 5-10; Lk. 1: 39-45

French Lick, Indiana (population 1,841 in 2019) is a rural community in southern Indiana that is best known as the home town of Larry Bird, who is arguably among the best half-dozen basketball players of all time. Kangiqsualujjuaq, Quebec (population 874 in 2011) is an Inuit village on the shore of Ungava Bay in northern Quebec that is the home town of Mary Simon, our new Governor-General. Great people can come from small towns and humble beginnings.

Micah had foreseen the failure of the rulers of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem. He prophesied that someone from a minor clan would come from the little town of Bethlehem to lead the people and to restore the glory of the nation. King David had already come from Bethlehem but now Israel needed someone else to take care of them. After almost 800 years, the prophecy was fulfilled by the birth of Jesus.

The days of Advent have been filled with excitement as we await the day of the Lord, the birthday of Jesus. In the working world, there is increasing excitement and pressure as everyone tries to finish year-end projects. Our lives at home are hectic and filled with excitement too: gifts to buy and wrap, Christmas cards to send, decorations to put up, food to prepare, and on and on. It can all make us yearn for sleep, to 'sleep in heavenly peace' in the words of the carol: Silent Night.

In the Gospel, there was great excitement also. Both Elizabeth and Mary had conceived under strange circumstances. Elizabeth when she was well beyond her child-bearing years and Mary who was not yet married. And even though she was pregnant, Mary went with haste to visit her cousin. They probably wanted to compare notes as to what was happening to them and what it could mean.

And when Mary approached Elizabeth, the child who would become John the Baptist, jumped with excitement and anticipation. While he was still in Elizabeth's womb, John anticipated the coming of Jesus into the world; an event foretold by the prophets including Micah. Though he was yet to be born, John knew that he was in the presence of the Saviour of the World.

What about us? As the day of the Lord draws near, are we preparing with eager anticipation for the birth of Jesus or are we simply caught up in the excitement of the world? At this time of increasing stress, we all seek 'heavenly peace'. But how do we find it?

Micah provides the answer at the end of his prophesy when he says: '...and He shall be peace.' Notice that he doesn't say: 'He shall bring peace' or 'He shall give you peace'. Micah said: 'He shall be peace'.

Jesus is peace. He is the very embodiment of peace. To know Jesus is to know peace. If we come to know Jesus, if we develop a personal relationship with Jesus, we will have peace. We won't have to struggle to find it. By being close to Jesus, we will find peace. How do we develop a close personal relationship with Jesus? By following His commandments, trusting totally in Him, and imitating Him. By imitating Him, we will come to know Him. By knowing Him, we will come to love Him. Only then will we find true peace because Jesus is peace.

Let us pray for the grace of conversion that we may find the peace we desire this Christmas; a peace that the world does not know, nor does it understand.