

'GOD THE HUMBLE LOVER' - CHRISTMAS HOMILY – 24/25 DECEMBER 2016

Christmas is a time of family reunions for some.

A time of juggling family commitments.

A time of loneliness for some while for others it is a time of celebrating.

A time of social media connections, Christmas cards and emails.

A time of contacting people that we haven't heard from in the last 12 months.

A time of missing loved ones who died during the year, or whose anniversaries of death are around Christmas and New Year.

A time of celebrating that this year, this Christmas is different in some important way.

A time of leisure, holidays or just days off.

A time for watching cricket or sailing, or family sports in the park, or going to the beach.

A time for special treats, buying gifts for others, receiving a special gift.

A time of shopping or going out for a meal.

A time of listening to Christmas music, Christmas cooking and decorating the house.

A time of being in the present.

A time of holding tempers in check, or regretting something we said for months and years ahead.

A time of feeling appreciated or not feeling appreciated.

A time of extra patience.

A time of goodwill.

A time of cheer.

At its core, it is **THE TIME OF GOD, THE HUMBLE LOVER.
GOD WHO BECOMES SO APPROACHABLE.**

In November **1971 The Synod of Bishops** met to explore "**Justice in the World**".

It was an incredible document, but the Catholic Church never fully followed up on its recommendations.

As you watch Pope Francis in his ministry, you can see him living out that Document and many other Church Teachings on justice and mercy.

In December **1971 Pope Paul VI explained the Christmas Message** of God's saving love with these words:

"God could have come wrapped in glory, splendour, light and power, to instill fear, to make us rub our eyes in amazement.

But instead he came as the smallest, the frailest and weakest of beings. Why? So that no one would be ashamed to approach him, so that no one would be afraid, so that all would be close to him and draw near him, so that there would be no distance between us and him.

God made the effort to plunge, to dive deep within us, so that each of us, each of you, could speak intimately with him, trust him, draw near him and realize that he thinks of you and loves you... He loves you!

Think about what this means!

If you understand this, if you remember what I am saying, you will have understood the whole of Christianity".

This Christmas, 2016 Pope Francis in his Message to the Roman Curia adds to these words,
*“Christmas is thus the feast of the loving humility of God, of the God who upsets our logical expectations, the established order, the order of the dialectician and the mathematician.
In this upset lies all the richness of God’s own thinking, which overturns our limited human ways of thinking (cf. Is 55: 8-9).*

... At Christmas, we are called to say “yes” with our faith, not to the Master of the universe, and not even to the most noble of ideas, but precisely to this God who is the humble lover.”

God chose to be born a tiny child because he wanted to be loved.

Here we see, as it were, how the logic of Christmas is the overturning of worldly logic, of the mentality of power and might, the thinking of the Pharisees and those who see things only in terms of causality or determinism.”

This past Christmas week, we heard in the media that the Federal Government plans to settle about 3,500 Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Southeast Queensland. Destinations are expected to be Brisbane, Logan, Toowoomba and the Gold Coast. There are two national refugee intakes from Syria and Iraq. Firstly from the annual Humanitarian Intake. Secondly from the Special Intake. Nearly 1,000 Syrian and Iraqi people have already arrived in south east Queensland from April to early December this year. There are around 450 from the annual intake and 550 from the special intake. Logan and northern Brisbane have been the areas in southeast Queensland for the largest intakes this year. Of course many more to go other States of Australia as well.

With larger numbers of refugee people next year from war-torn countries and with many of the people having lost so much, the people of Southeast Queensland have -
ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY TO WORK TOGETHER IN LOVING OUR NEIGHBOUR.
ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY to **LIVE** the Christmas Message that **GOD IS THE HUMBLE LOVER** and we are called to follow.
ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY to **KNOW GOD** who is so **APPROACHABLE.**

In Matthew’s Gospel, we hear that Joseph receives the message to take Mary home.

The message comes in a dream.

We ourselves have many, many dreams while we sleep.

We don’t remember many of them.

Some we do, and we try to work out the symbols and how they relate to us.

Sometimes we go to sleep with one or more problems, and we wake up with a solution.

We say that we have slept on it.

There are other times when God directly and purposefully enters our dream and grants us a way forward and graced with incredible peace.

That peace stays with us when we wake, and can stay for days or weeks or even longer.

As a sign, it can stay with us ever in the direction we take.

I wonder if Joseph was touched by that incredible peace, when God told him in a dream to accept Mary home and that she had conceived through the Holy Spirit.

I am so grateful for the peace that God gave me in a dream a few days ago and which has entered into Christmas.

Let us draw on whatever way God, as the humble lover, touches each of us.

Let us reach out to each other humbly and lovingly.

Inspired by Jesus.

Each of us loved by Jesus.

Let us pray.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – God the Humble Lover - 24/25 December 2016]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/122516.cfm>]

[Pope Francis message to Curia (also quotes Paul VI) full text <http://bit.ly/FrancistoCuria>]

[Parish Facebook: <http://bit.ly/parishFacebook2512016>]