

Msgr. Bill's Weekly Letter...

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

New City Press has published *Christmas at the Nativity* by Pope Francis. I thought a couple sections might be good for this third Sunday of Advent.

The virgin and her husband, with their love, made a smile blossom on the lips of their new born baby. But when this happened, their hearts were filled with the new joy, from heaven. And the little stable in Bethlehem was illuminated.

Jesus is the smile of God. He came to reveal to US the love of our heavenly father and his goodness. The first way he did so was to smile at his parents. They, the Virgin Mary and Saint Joseph, because of their great faith, were able to ascertain the message. They recognized in Jesus' smile God's mercy for them and for all those who were waiting for his coming, the coming of their Messiah, the son of God, the king of Israel.

Behold the manger, we too relive that experience. We look at the child Jesus and feel that God is smiling at us and smiling at the poor of the earth. He smiles at all those who await salvation, who hope for a more fraternal world, where there is no more war or violence. A world where every man and woman can live in his or her dignity as son and daughter of God.

We always need to let ourselves be renewed by the smile of the child Jesus. Let his defenseless goodness purify us from the waste that others deposit on our heart which prevents us from giving the best of ourselves.

Sometimes it becomes difficult to smile, for many reasons. Then we need God's smile, Jesus. Only he can help us. Only he is the savior. With his grace, we experience this in our lives.

Other times things go well, but then there is the danger of feeling too safe and forgetting about others who are suffering. Then, too, we need God's smile to strip us of false security and bring us back to the taste for simplicity and gratuitousness.

Let us embrace this wish at Christmas. While participating in the liturgy and also contemplating the Manger, let us wonder at God's smile, which Jesus came to bring. It is he himself, who is this smile. Like Mary, like Joseph, and the shepherds of Bethlehem, let us welcome him. Let us allow ourselves to be purified, so we too can bring others a humble, simple smile.

Thank you all for taking this wish to your loved ones at home, especially the sick and the elderly.

The first to see Jesus -- The first people to see the humble glory of the savior, after Mary and Joseph, were the shepherds of Bethlehem. They recognized the sign proclaimed to them by the angels and adored the child. These humble and watchful men are an example of the believers of every age who, before the mystery of Jesus, are not scandalized by his poverty. Rather, like Mary, they trust in God's word and contemplate his glory with simple eyes. Behold the mystery of the word made flesh. Christmas in every place confesses with the words of evangelist John: *We have beheld his glory, glory as the one begotten son from the Father full of grace and truth.*

We have many reasons to smile this Gaudete Sunday. Let's put one on our face.

pace – bene,

Msgr. Bill

