

Yesterday's Gospel, was the birth of John the Baptist. And the Gospel reading ended

All who heard these things took them to heart, saying,
"What, then, will this child be?
For surely the hand of the Lord was with him."

All I have been able to think about for the last two days, is that phrase running through my mind and ringing in my ears. "For surely the hand of the Lord was with him". We know the hand of the Lord was upon John, as he prophesized in the desert! "Prepare the way of the Lord!"

And surely the hand of the Lord was with Mary, and Joseph. And surely the hand of the Lord was with the Shepherds, who heard the message of the angels. And surely the hand of the Lord was upon the Wise Men who interpreted the sign of the star and followed where it led. And surely the hand of the Lord was upon the Apostles who answered the call and accepted the leadership of the Church in its infancy.

And surely the hand of the Lord is upon you and me...YES YOU AND ME! It is as true for you and me as it was for the heroes of our faith. It is not more true of Mary and Joseph, God's providential hand is upon each of us.

As we hear and read the Holy Story of how salvation dawned upon the world in the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ, we who hear these things take them to heart, and receive the blessing of God given to the world, and given to you; for you are part of God's plan of salvation.

Jesus was born into the world as the high point of his providential love for the world, and you are given the gift of his presence, his forgiveness, his love, his salvation, his election.

As we take these wonderous gifts to heart, we are then called to reflect how the hand of the Lord is upon us. And as part of the providence of God, whose plan for us is laid out. The question becomes, **how do we participate in God's providential grace, since we are given so great a gift? And what will be our gift in return?**

I call us to one of the Christmas Carol we hear on the radio a lot: "**The Little Drummer Boy.**" In measured cadence, the song reflects a steady movement toward the realization of the best gift one could give the Christ child, "I played my drum for Him, I played my best for Him." So if that is what I am willing to give the best to the Christ child, **shouldn't I bring to the world...to my children, grandchildren, and others my best gift of self?**

Baby Jesu, pa rum pum pum pum
I am a poor boy too, pa rum pum pum pum
I have no gift to bring, pa rum pum pum pum
That's fit to give the King, pa rum pum pum pum,
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,

Shall I play for you, pa rum pum pum pum,
On my drum?

Mary nodded, pa rum pum pum pum
The ox and lamb kept time, pa rum pum pum pum
I played my drum for Him, pa rum pum pum pum
I played my best for Him, pa rum pum pum pum,
rum pum pum pum, rum pum pum pum,

Then He smiled at me, pa rum pum pum pum
Me and my drum.

For the hand of the Lord is upon you and me. With this in mind and in heart-filled love, what is my best Christmas offerings:

May I be...

...the gift of a good model for the faith—in being faithful to the Lord, and My Sunday obligations

...virtuous in my language, using my tongue for prayer and praise and not for curse or cursing

...the gift of giving blessings—Not only to my children, but in the gift of doing for others--love is meant to be shared through acts of mercy, justice, and solidarity.

...gentle, loving and compassion with my family, building them up rather than tearing them down.

...(You fill in the blank).

The hand of the Lord is upon us...His providential love is there for us to recognize his plan for us. Christmas is the wonder of selfless love taking human flesh and teaching others how to selflessly love. Be that gift and have a joy-filled, peace-filled Christmas!