

Christmas Eve 2021 Homily

Well, Merry Christmas everyone. Please know that we are all engaged in an experiment: human living. Each moment of human life is an experiment. We think we know what we are doing. If we are truly honest with ourselves, we know better and do our best anyway in the moment. Forgiveness is key.

Thank you for coming together in both environments: real and virtual. And thanks to Fr. Gerry and his team who are producing our gathering tonight. Thank you.

May we rejoice and be glad that we are all here and now.

The original Rule of St. Benedict suggest: *Let them prefer nothing whatever to Christ and may he bring us all together to everlasting life.* (RB 72.11)

In tonight's Gospel we heard:
you will find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.

Christmas – the birth of Christ.

When we imagine Jesus what image do we produce in our imagination?

Is it a cross? A cross with a corpus? A statute of the Sacred Heart of Jesus?
In most instances, we usually produce an adult image, do we not?

A Recommendation – instead of an adult image how about producing an image of the infant Jesus: an infant wrapped in swaddling clothe and lying in a manger, just smiling and looking at you as he lays in his crib – ok, a manger?

His eyes are deep and penetrating. Perhaps this is why the adult Jesus is later to have said: *Unless you have the mind of a child you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.*
What is this mind of a child – the look behind the infant's eyes?

First, we recognize there is no evidence of an ego that is, no created Great Trinity - which by the way is not the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

The Great Trinity in the human domain is:

My, Myself, and I.

All we need to do is look at the front page of a newspaper and we can realize that everything that is occurring in the world is a product of *Me-Myself, and I.*

Next, the smiling infant is yet unconditioned or acculturate into the mores and customs of the family, state, and church wherein the child evolves according to his or her own temperament.

Third, the smiling infant has no concept of time – the infant is not stressed out --

no past or depression, no present or worry, no future or anxiety. The happy, smiling infant child just experiences NOW.

Fourth, the infant child can be angry in the moment and he passes that state soon enough. The infant does not hold grudges.

**Lastly, and perhaps most importantly of all,
the infant child does not take life personally.
Life is not a personal event.
He or she just *is* in the moment,
however s/he may be.**

Keeping this smiling, infant Jesus in mind/heart, we could ask how we each individually could bring this smiling, infant child into our own lives.

“For what benefit?” we could also ask. Well, we would certainly remove a lot of the unnecessary pain and suffering that we create for ourselves in our own lives – we being so very adult about it all!

We each have this child-like mind. It came with the package of being human. How do we do re-awaken our natural child-like minds In our day-to-day lives, minute-by-minute?

All we need to do is change our perspective, which, as is beauty, is always in the eye of the beholder.

We are making our experience up as we go along.

Through our acts of perception,
we create our experiences
via our six senses.
None of us here are having the same experience.
We each are creating
our own separate and individual experience.
Thus, are we all one in the same experience.
We are the creator of our experience, our choice.
Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

First, a recollection:

Few of us here are now breathing properly. We may be stressed and do not even know it. Let us pay attention for a moment to how we our breathing. Are we breathing in our upper chest? We may find our breathing uneven as to the inhale and exhale. We might even find we are holding our breath unconsciously.

A simple breathing practice even used by US Navy Seals:

WHICH WE MUST PRACTICE.

This practice an easy way to change our perspective in any moment, in any situation no matter what is going on.

In a situation, we may loose ourselves internally, any thought, feeling or emotion or, externally, any person, place, thing or event.

We get lost in time, we get anxious or we worry or get depressed – it's all unnecessary pain and suffering.

But, if we want all that all unnecessary pain and suffering, so be it. Not an issue.

If depressed, caught in the now non-existent past, imagine an innocently smiling infant Christ in a manger – breathe in slowly to the count of 4 -- 1-2-3-4 exhale slowly through pursed lips -- 4-3-2-1 to the count of 4 for four times.

If anxious, caught in the now not yet future, imagine the innocently smiling infant Christ in a manger – breathe in slowly to the count of 4 -- 1-2-3-4 exhale slowly through pursed lips to the count of 4 for four times. -- 4-3-2-1

When we do this practice, we notice that there is a change in our perspective, in our whole physiological being as we activate our parasympathic nervous system. Our blood pressure goes down, our stress levels will go down. Of course, underneath all of this we are oxygenating our bodies.

If worried, caught in a present that is not past and not yet future, imagine Christ in a manger -- the innocently smiling infant breathe in slowly to the count of 4 -- 1-2-3-4 exhale slowly through pursed lips to the count of 4 for four times. -- 4-3-2-1

When we elect to be worried, depressed or anxious, we are creating two events simultaneously.

First, we are taking a person, place, or thing or event:

or a thought, feeling or emotion

personally.

We are taking the moment personally.

Secondly, we are **resisting** that event,

We don't want to feel that way!.

We are caught in the perceptual web of our own creation.

The more we resist, the more the event persists.

All we need do is **Just stop**, pause, breathe,

breathe in slowly to the count of 4 -- 1-2-3-4

exhale slowly through pursed lips -- 4-3-2-1

and change our perspective.

With a changed perspective,

with the image of the Christ child in mind/heart,

we will be better position to handle

the contents of present moment.

We'll position ourselves

to be much more responsive

rather than reactive.

We may even find ourselves smiling

at the irony of the situation and our own selves

– just as a little kid would –

– *those crazy adults!*.

Jesus said:

My peace I leave give unto you.

My Peace I give unto you (John 14:27).

And what is this peace but **peace of mind and heart?**.

Practice 4 x 4 breathing.

Merry Christmas.

Thank you and Peace and Joy to you and yours.

White Robed Monks of St. Benedict