

CHRISTMAS HOMILY

DECEMBER 25, 2020

Fr Mike

Saint Clement Catholic Church

Plant City, FL

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Dear parish family of Saint Clement in plant city, Florida.

For the past four weeks of Advent, my wife Mary, has been your guide. She helped you prepare to **ENCOUNTER** the coming of Jesus in history, mystery and majesty.

I will now be your guide for the entire Christmas season, that doesn't end till January 10; the feast of the baptism of the Lord.

Church, let's begin by acknowledging the elephant in the room:

You may not "feel like" celebrating Christmas this year, because of COVID-19. I can understand that. I didn't feel like traveling 80 long treacherous miles with a very pregnant wife, in order to register for the census!

At first I was not a happy camper. Mary realized this and one day she said: ***"Joey, stop trying to control the things you cannot control. You can't control the Emperor's decision. Instead control the things you can control, like your emotions and attitude!!!"***

Church, that was a major wake up call for me. Up until this time, I was one of those people always on a **SLOW BOIL**. I was constantly troubled about something out of my control. Mary's words to me as we traveled to Bethlehem, forced me to acknowledge that my approach was not only affecting me but the people whom I loved.

Church, consider a different approach to Christmas this year. Instead of celebrating Christmas; why not try encountering Christmas!!!

Friends; for the first few days of our journey to Bethlehem, I was grumpy & tense. Then Mary took me aside and socked it to me with: ***"Joey, stop trying to control the things you cannot control. You can't control the Emperor's decision. Instead control the things you can control, like your emotions and attitude!!!"***

Church, I wasn't the brightest student in our Jewish youth group, but I did know, that the promised Messiah was prophesied to be born in Bethlehem. DUH!!!! Mary was pregnant by the power of the Holy Spirit with the Messiah and now because of the royal decree he would be born in the City of David!

Church once I added 1+1 and got 2, my whole demeanor changed. Mary was right: I **COULD** control my emotions and attitude. Instead of fighting the Emperor's decree, I realized there was a bigger purpose for our long trek to Bethlehem!

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I am sure glad I did. By the time we reached Bethlehem, we couldn't find any private lodgings. I was able, I was able; to find some room where people usually kept their animals.

Normally, I would have blown a major gasket, instead I was very much, very much in-tuned, with ENCOUNTERING, with Mary, the miraculous birth of the Messiah! Church, I still get "Chills" when I think of that moment. Church, I still get "Chills" when I think of that moment.

Oh how I easily I could have been upset, that no one would give me and my pregnant wife lodgings. Oh how easily I could have been upset, with the **CIRCUMSTANCES** I could not control.

Instead, instead, I tried to totally concentrate on **ENCOUNTERING** the event, that would alter for all time, human history: THE BIRTH OF JESUS; SON OF GOD & SON OF MARY!!!!

Just think, I could have easily missed it, if I still had my old ways of trying to control the things, I could not control!

Church you can't control COVID-19's affect on your celebrations at Christmas. You CAN control, how you **ENCOUNTER** Christmas, in spite of the coronavirus.

Did you notice the new manger scene out by the three crosses that face Alexander Street?

Under the main cross, there is a large white wooden manger. On either side, there is an angel, each holding a scroll that proclaims in English and Spanish:

**THE WOOD OF THE CRIB
LEADS TO THE WOOD OF THE CROSS**

Church, this is my special Christmas season gift to you. This simple phrase:

**THE WOOD OF THE CRIB
LEADS TO THE WOOD OF THE CROSS**

is meant to lead you to go beyond celebrating Christmas, **TO ENCOUNTERING CHRISTMAS!**

In this one simple phrase, you are INVITED to UNDERSTAND the PURPOSE of His Birth: Jesus came to RECONCILE us with his Father, through his, LIFE, DEATH & RESURRECTION.

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ENCOUNTERING Christmas, is realizing the PURPOSE for which Jesus was born, and allowing HIM, to influence ALL ASPECTS OF YOUR LIFE.

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Church, COVID-19, may keep you from the way you normally celebrate Christmas.

Covid-19, CAN NOT keep you: **FROM ENCOUNTERING CHRISTMAS!**

Love,
Joseph,
Mary's most Chaste Spouse and the Man who raised Jesus.

Amen,
Amen!