

December 24, 2015 – Christmas Eve
Celebrating Jesus' Birthday & Jesus' Mercy

Good evening children!

Welcome to this celebration of the birthday of Jesus.

You know, I was just wondering.

Do any of you watch the Lone Ranger on the TV?

(show of hands)

Oh, you don't know the Lone Ranger?

Do you watch Hoody Doody on TV?

No?

Wow! They were all popular when I was a kid.

Now young people don't know anything about them!

Well, how about Big Bird, Oscar, and Ernie on Sesame Street?

Yes? That show has a good message.

How about SpongeBob SquarePants?

How about Ninja Turtles?

Umm, so some people who were very well known when I was a kid are not even known now.

And now there are some new people on TV.

My point is that some people can be very popular for awhile and then they fade away.

BUT, not the person whose birthday we are celebrating today!.

Whose birthday is it?

Yes, baby Jesus!

How many candles should we put on the cake?

Yes, over 2000 candles!

Jesus has been such an important figure that we even count the years based on when Jesus was born!

Why do you think we still remember him and celebrate his birthday?

We remember Jesus for

- what he said,
- what he did and
- how he treated people.

Can you tell me something that Jesus said?

Can you tell me something that Jesus did?

Can you tell me something about how Jesus treated people?

[ask the kids for their important recollections about Jesus]

Things that Jesus said and did, and how he treated people have had a big impact on many people for these last 2000 years.

One word that tells us a lot about Jesus is "**mercy**".

He felt really close to people, all kinds of people.

He felt sorry for them when they had problems.

He did lots to help people with problems. He showed **mercy**.

People began to say, "Jesus has lots of great ideas. We should be like that also."

Jesus said to care for the sick; so his followers began to form groups to take care of the sick. They began to make hospitals, hospitals like Providence, St. John's and others. Then other people came to think like them and so they also made hospitals.

Jesus said to feed the hungry and give the thirsty something to drink; so his followers began to form groups to take care of those people. We have a group like that here at our church. It is called "St. Vincent de Paul". They helped get food for people at Thanksgiving and again at Christmas. Actually they help hungry people all year long.

Jesus said to welcome the stranger; so his followers have organized to welcome new-comers to their neighborhoods and to their churches. Others especially work to welcome strangers that come from far, far away, like from Syria ... and Mexico ... and Africa ... and the Caribbean ... and the Philippines.

So much is happening today because baby Jesus grew up to be a **merciful** person who taught others how to be **merciful**.

Wow, 2000 years and people are still saying "Jesus, what a great example you set for us. We are going to try to be just like you."

Do you have some ideas on how you can be like Jesus and show **mercy** to others?

- OK - no picking on other people
 - o Yes, even be friendly to your brother or sister!
- Not being a bully (no, Jesus was not a bully!)
- Share some candy with someone who has none.
- Play nicely with other kids - share your toys with them.
- One very good idea for any situation is the famous saying: "What would Jesus do?"

Yes, each of you can have a positive impact on the people around you!

OK; here is a Christmas invitation card for each of you.

There's also another card which you can share with someone else.

Please share the note inside with others in your family.

Thank you children; you can go back to your places.

Let me follow on with a few ideas for us adults here today.

We come here to this building to learn more about baby Jesus and about Jesus the adult.

We believe that *Jesus is the best* person to follow.

Jesus has had quite an influence all around the world.

After 2000 years almost 1/3 of all people in the whole world follow Jesus; we call ourselves Christians.

Half of all the Christians in the world are Catholics.

For all of us Catholics, and for all people of good will, Pope Francis has called for a year of **mercy**

... a year of treating others as Jesus has taught us

... feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger, caring for the sick.

Please think about how Jesus exemplifies **mercy** in his life:

- When you are:
 - With your family members,
 - With you coworkers,
 - with your neighbors,
 - with people you meet anywhere.
- **Mercy**
- When you hear the politicians presenting their positions as we get ready for elections next year ... are they showing **mercy**?
- When you come to the end of the day and have your little chat with the Lord about how things have gone that day ..."have I been **merciful**?"

Ah, yes, wouldn't the world be so, so much better if we took our lead from this baby Jesus, this adult Jesus, this Son of God;

If we took his lead every day, in every transaction, in every conversation. Jesus has got staying power ... he's been followed for 2000 years ... with such good reason.

Merry Christmas to all and blessings to all in the New Year, a year of **Mercy!**