

## **Christmas homily 2018**

**I often image the season of Christmas as a house. The house of Christmas is like a house, a very unique house. It is a round house with three rooms, each encircling the other. During the Christmas season we live in the rooms of culture and Church. There is no escaping them.**

**The outer circle is the room of culture which holds all our society's expressions of Christmas. Shopping, gift-giving, TV specials, choir programs, office parties, the Santa Claus story, and endless variations of family gatherings, decorations, evergreen trees, sending out Christmas cards with pictures of children and family updates and so many other examples.**

**The middle circle is the room of the church. In the middle room of our Christmas house are all the church activities, liturgies (like tonight's – refer to the decorations, music), reading of scripture, sacred music, plays that are to honor the birthday of Christ.**

**The inner circle is mystical room. It can be easily skipped over. In this room the birth of Christ happens in the soul and the religious language of Christmas has a different meaning.**

**During the Christmas season we have to live in the rooms of culture and church. There is no escaping them. Unfortunately, these two**

rooms do not often get along. Often the church is accusing the culture of making Christmas a feast of materialism for economic gain. At best, the church often reduces Christmas to peace, love and joy, without any mention of the what or why or how of peace , love and joy.

As for the mystical room of Christmas --- the cultural room does not even know it exists (story of the BMO men) and the church room to a degree knows that it exists but is a bit suspicious of it, but actually by entering the mystical room it allows us to best inhabit the room of the church and the room of culture and discern the genuine from the fake. The mystical room is where the birth of Christ happens in the soul.

Since we can easily skip it, let's spend a few moments on how to best get into our inner room, our mystical room, so that we can really enjoy Christmas in Church and celebrate it in our culture.

The inner room is not easily accessible. The only way we can enter is follow those who have already been there. We must begin with a word from someone else, follow their instructions and then find out for ourselves.

This is where the story of the shepherds in today's gospel is very helpful.

The shepherds were out in the fields. They were doing their secular jobs, living in the outer room. Then the angels came and told the shepherds where they could find the Christ, how they could enter the mystical room. Someone had to tell them how to find the child. And someone needs to tell us about our mystical room and of the child who dwells there. We need to listen to the angels which God may send our way. In fact, the Bible is a record of people who have entered the mystical room. It also can parents and grandparents and uncles and aunts and cousins and friends who have come to know the Lord. But they too, like the shepherds, needed to be led by someone who has already entered the mystical room of prayer.

How do we enter into this third room? We must choose to withdraw from the culture and busyness of life to choose to enter into the mystical room. That's difficult in a secular world. And so, to assist you, we have a special Christmas gift for everyone, along with the sacred music, the warm community, and the festive atmosphere, when leaving church will receive a free copy of Rediscover Jesus. It is one person's reflection on finding the deeper presence of Christ in their life and on how we might enter the inner room of our souls.

**As soon as the shepherds, who are open to the angels' message, they hear the good news about the birth, then they hurried to the stable. Then experiencing the new birth in their inner room, what did they do?...they hurried to tell others the Good News of the birth.**

**(Pause)**

**How do we sum up the evening we celebrate? How do we enter into the inner room which can give meaning and clarity to our celebrations this season? Let me leave you with simple quote from Scripture on how to enter into your inner room.**

**Jesus said, "Unless you become like a little child, you cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven.**

**I suggest we change the words of Jesus just a bit.**

**Unless you become a little child, unless you open your inner self to the Lord, the Kingdom of God cannot enter into you.**

**Make space this Christmas and experience the one who comes to rule our hearts and minds. Once again be reborn with the openness of a new born child so that the Spirit of God may come and dwell within.**