



## December 24, 2018 - A Christmas Message Given by Rev. Mattei

### [Luke 2:1-14](#)

What we are presented with in today's gospel is the introduction to a proposal of life according to the divine plan, a new kingdom with the birth of a humble king. It's a new vision depicted by poetry in the lukan narration of Jesus' birth:

- Historical context of big names and consequential, temporary events (the Roman leadership and the counting of the subjects and their properties for taxation and social control purposes), and humble people, actors of a salvation drama with global and eternal ramification;
- Middle-Eastern hospitality:
  - Joseph's in his act of accepting Mary and her premature pregnancy rather than denouncing her and have her stoned,
  - and the innkeeper's by making room for a baby and a family in distress in the stable for the inn was crowded due to the imperial census;
- Shepherds in the field at night, watching over their sheep;
- Angel announcing good news of great joy: the birth of the Savior, the Messiah, the Lord, a vulnerable baby, lying in a manger;
- A polyphonic choir of angels praising God in a glorious manifestation;
- Shepherds listening and paying attention to the message and the development of events and commonly deciding ("*let us go and see*") to be part of this new reality taking shape no matter the risk (sheep could not be left in the fields but needed to be led to Bethlehem in the dark).

We can treat it as a story meant for naive people and children; a nice tale to feel warm and fuzzy about for a time that reveals itself short lived when the hardship of life hits. Or we may let it speak to us in its creative and profound ways.

It's not the military conquests, social control and political affluence of the Roman Emperor or any modern day tyrant that should impress, inspire or influence us and direct our choices, but the humble and vulnerable beginnings of the God who is for us and with us. Through humility and service, Jesus demonstrates a leadership style and moral authority that empowers people to experience spiritual healing and inner power, peace and hope.

The manger, mentioned three times by Luke, is a symbol of how Jesus has approached life in full humility and simplicity. The Savior of the world, the Prince of Peace brings about salvation for all and associates with the least and the last in society. Emperor Augustus was also called

savior and prince of peace because he brought security and stability after a long and turbulent period of civil war. However, the Roman peace (Pax Romana) is imperial peace. It favors the elites and oppresses the disadvantaged and marginalized people. Jesus' birth teaches us that God does not distance Godself from the suffering of the marginalized.

This Christmas night let us pick up the invitation of the shepherds to "go and see" and ponder with Mary what it is that God is doing. May Jesus find a manger in our hearts from where compassion and solidarity with those who suffer start, and may we receive the good news in solidarity with the vulnerable. Amen.