

# ***ECCE EVANGELIZO VOBIS GAUDIUM MAGNUM***

*A Homily for Christmas  
St Paul's Parish, Gävle, Sweden.*

***“Listen, I bring you news of great joy”***. Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, the words of the angels’ greeting are what we all need to hear today as we rejoice with the rest of the world over the birth of the Saviour of the human race. You will all agree with me that the word “news” is used almost exclusively to relate horrible events, which happen in our world. No matter any channel of the television one tunes to, the newspaper one reads or the news site one visits on the Internet, the “news” is almost always about wars or rumours of wars, about instances of corruption, about heinous crimes, about the hypocrisy of politicians who claim to be solving the problems of the world, about diseases, about natural disasters or the effects of climate change, or about the current financial crisis. In a word, it is about evil in the world. It is precisely because of these evils that threaten us that what I bring to you is “news of great joy”. For today as in time past a Saviour is born for us. This is a cause of great consolation to all of us. For when God saw that ***“all have sinned and all have come short of the glory of God”*** (Rom 3:23), He chose to save us from the guilt of the children of Adam. Aware that we cannot save ourselves from mutual destruction, God became man. And that is the NEWS. It is no mere history. It is no mere celebration of a birthday anniversary. Rather, it is the event that is not only historic and historical but an event that is happening NOW. The One who in the beginning was the Word took flesh in the immaculate womb of the Virgin Mary and became Man when the appointed time came. The Author of life itself, through whom all things were made, came to our help to teach us that he is “the Way, the Truth and the Life”. (Jn. 14:6). He whom the heavens cannot contain came to lie in a manger, wrapped in swaddling clothes. For our sake the Eternal God became one of us so that we may become one with God in eternity. The birth of the Redeemer of Man is the foundation on which God’s “roadmap” to true peace, real happiness and perfect joy based on justice, truth and love is established. For our Saviour came to set us free from our self-enslavement by the shedding of His blood on the Cross of Calvary. But He could shed His blood because he became Man. He rose from the dead for our justification because he first died. He, the immortal God took on Himself our mortal flesh so that we may share in His eternal bliss. This is the depth of love and it is the Good News, the news of great joy.

So, the wars and rumours of wars need not make us lose our faith in the Prince of Peace. The gory tales of the sufferings of millions of fatally ill human beings turn to news of new hope in the face of

the birth of Health of the Sick. The horrifying images of those dying of hunger need not make us sad when we remember that Jesus fed thousands of hungry people. The biting effects of the collapse of the financial market – the job losses, the home closures, all these should not make us to lose faith. The nature of the Saviour's birth teaches us to store up our treasures, not here on earth, but in heaven. We are challenged to put all our trust in the One who was rich but who made himself poor for our sake. Here is the teaching of the One who chose to be born in a manger and it is a truism: "***Life does not consist in possessions, even when someone has more than he needs***" (Lk. 12:15) because "...***we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out of it***" (1 Timothy 6:7-10).

The News of the Saviour's birth should put a burning fire in us to go out and tell the whole world what we have heard, what we believe. It is a reason to join the angels and sing, "***Glory be to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace to those on whom His favour rests***". This is especially true in this Year of St Paul, when our call to proclaim the Gospel is renewed. While we sing, let us take note of the wording of our song. The peace of the Lord comes to those who are God's friends. And who are they? St Peter answers, "God has no favourites. Everyone who does what is right, irrespective of the person's place of origin is acceptable to Him"(Acts 10:34,35). In other words, the gift of peace, which the Son of God brings, is for all who are ready to receive it. As it is, not everyone is ready to receive this peace. When we look through our windows we see that many people are not really listening to this News.

The people of our time and the people who lived in Palestine at the time Jesus was born in Bethlehem are no different. When Mary was to give birth to her son, there was no room in the inn. The people of that time were so pre-occupied with the affairs of this world that they did not know when the Saviour was born. The scribes and all the learned religious men, who had waited for thousands of years for the coming of the Hope of Israel, did not see His star when He came. They were too engrossed in the affairs of the world. Only the wise men from the East saw the Star. The men and women who went to register for census as ordered by Caesar Augustus, were engrossed in the affairs of the emperor that they had no room for the King of kings when He was born of the Virgin. At our own time, here in this town, here in this country, many of us are so engrossed in the affairs that are not the affairs of the Lord that they have lost the meaning of the feast we celebrate. What is the point in claiming that we are celebrating the birthday of Christ when Christ is not welcome to the feast? How can it be called ***Christmas*** when it is not celebrated in honour of ***Christ*** and many do not care for ***Mass***?

Yet I thank God that you are here with me. I charge you today in the name of the New Born King, to be bearers of the Good News, the News of great joy. Tell members of your family, your friends, everyone, that the only Hope of the world is among us. If we all should abandon our misguided

claim to have the solution to the problems that plague our world and listen instead to Him, then peace will reign and hunger will be eradicated. It is true that there is serious problem with the economy. But that is not the real problem that the world faces. The nagging problem of the world is the lack of the knowledge of the abiding presence of the Eternal King born for us today of the Virgin Mary.

*Glory to God in the highest heaven and  
on earth peace among men and women on whom His favour rests!  
May we all be counted among those on whom God's favour rests. Amen.*

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