

Christmas Day Cycle B December 25, 2011  
*Isaiah 62:1-5 Acts 13:16-17,22-25 Matthew 1:18-25*

Intervention. When two opposing forces come at each other, meet each other, or collide with each other, then an intervention is necessary. Some outside force is needed. Someone with the skill and talent and wisdom and wherewithal to bring about a better situation than previously existed.

An intervention is performed by someone or some group that will take a hazardous or extremely difficult and dangerous situation, and halt/prevent bloodshed or violence. An intervener who performs intervention successfully is likened to a person of peace. Peace is the desire and goal of such a person or group.

Intervention, like many words, can be used in alternate ways or have a secondary meaning. Today, we hear the word intervention as it connects to war. Sometimes it even replaces the word “war.” A military intervention, say, in Somalia or some other country where genocide has/is occurring. A third party stepping in with the express purpose of preventing further death and destruction of a population and land from the hands of those with evil intentions is called an intervention. Such a move is made for good purpose and reason, and thank God we do so. But it’s still a form of war. In this case, with the intention to save lives.

This type of intervention may be accomplished by a nation, nations, or an organization such as the United Nations. They specialize, when they choose to, at intervening.

What we celebrate on Christmas Day is the word “intervention.” The Christmas meaning is quite different from how we understand this word today with regard to stepping in/preventing. Yet, some elements of our understanding of what it means to intervene remain present as a result of the events of December 25.

For example, when Jesus is born of the Virgin Mary, born into this world by way of emptying himself and taking on the form of a slave, his birth is an intervention that addresses two forces. Two opposing forces. The first force is the goodness we are to express in our humanity towards one another. This is called love. So in this corner, we have love. The second force is the force that tries its best to draw us away from the goodness we are to express toward one another, and cause confusion, bitterness, separation, and hatred through sin. This is called evil. So in this corner we have evil.

So the battle is between good and evil. Between us and the devil.

What Jesus does in his coming to us in a manger is to show us the way, the path, the ability, and grant us the grace to choose the power of good. The power of love that defines what it means to be human more than anything else.

Jesus’ birth is an intervention into our world that sides with us. He chooses our corner. The corner of love. His birth is an intervention that informs us that life is worth living in the ways of love because our lives will transcend the wars of this world and bring us to that place of peace.

Jesus is the all-time great Intervener. His intervention, his birth, empowers us to work through our issues and choose the good in everything.

The similarity with the worldly use of the word *intervention* is that the battle is on. The war has been won through the Cross and Resurrection, but while we remain in the world, the battle between the forces of good and evil is 24/7. Jesus’ birth is a

sounding board, a loud intercom, blasting to us through the speakers of our hearts that our help has arrived.

The questions always before us are, “Do we want his help? Do we desire his intervention...in everything. In our families, our work, our friendships, relationships, and in the violence and war of our lives?”

This is the offer of his birth.

God intervenes with Gabriel (an angel “sent by God”); Gabriel intervenes with Mary; Mary intervenes with Elizabeth; Gabriel intervenes with Joseph (he’s one busy angel); the shepherds intervene with Jesus. They must come to the manger and see this sight.

My prayer for this Christmas is that Jesus’ birth will touch our lives in ways that will continue to open our hearts to his intervention. What makes this possible is to have a bonafide desire to seek him. In the Scriptures; in the Eucharist; in His Church. In all places where the Lord is found in the deepest experiences made possible in our short time in this world.

Traveling alone, without the Intervener of Bethlehem, is a path to nowhere. Embracing the birth of Jesus Christ, everyday for the rest of our lives, is a path to heaven.

His birth promises salvation. His birth declares war on evil. His birth will raise us to the stature promised from the beginning. His birth is the greatest intervention of all time. And he does it all for us out of love for us.