

- Well...a very merry and blessed Christmas to all of you.
- “*Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.*”
- What does that mean...when the angels say “...*on earth peace to those on whom His favor rests*”?
- Are the angels blessing us?...or is it simply a statement of fact—that God grants peace on those with whom He is pleased.
- No doubt both in some sense; the angels stand in awe of the love of God towards Man...and to the lengths that He goes for that love.
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- A parable that would be very appropriate for Christmas is the Prodigal Son and his father.
- We are like that prodigal son...stubborn, rebellious, wanting everything for nothing, and yet so undeserving.
- But, nevertheless, the Father waits for us...waits for us to come down the road toward home...and when he sees us making that effort to return to him...as in that parable, the Father runs out to meet us... no anger, no recrimination.
- The most beautiful aspect of that parable is the Father’s absolute love, and implied with his running down the road to welcome his son home is the casting aside even of due dignity...so is the father’s love for his child.
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- God shows us this same love today in the birth of Jesus.
- God comes in the flesh—*in-carnate*—casting aside His due dignity and decorum, so to speak...becoming “for a little while was...lower than the angels” (Heb 2:9 RSV) for us so that we might come home.
- When Jesus comes to us as a little child, God gives everything for us—his immensity subsumed into a tiny infant, his omnipotence in

becoming a helpless baby, His eternal dignity eclipsed as He lays in a feed trough...with animal food as his bed.

- Behold, O Christian, God's love for you.
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- Our Creed of faith tell us: "*For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate [enfleshed] of the Virgin Mary, and became man.*"
- Because of the unfathomable humility of God in doing this, we are directed to ALL normally bow at that point in the Creed as you see the Deacon and I do...but today, in special honor for this great mystery and mercy of God, we will pause and genuflect at those words.
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- Now the second part of the announcement of the angels is that God's peace is "*to those on whom his favor rests*".
- Who is that? Those who live by the instruction He gives us—through the Gospel...through scripture...through His teacher ever guided by the Holy Spirit--the Church.
- We accept or reject HIM according to our faith and obedience to His word.
- Because the prodigal son's home and father remain fixed—the eternal anchor...the eternal homestead.
- His teaching does not waver over time—now one thing, tomorrow the opposite. God does not vacillate according to the whims of Man.
- As scripture tells us: "*Jesus Christ [and therefore God the Father] is the same yesterday and today and forever. Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings.*" (Heb 13:8-9 RSV)
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- Our tendency is to act like early teenagers—thinking WE know all...and our parents *soooooo* stupid. Thus, we often believe we know more than God Himself...and that God should change to fit what WE think.

- But who knows more...the driver of a car, or the designer who built and fitted every nut and bolt. Likewise, we may “drive the car”... steer our own lives...but it is God who built and designed us...and knows more than anyone what is good for us.
- Thus it is not for God to follow us, but for us follow Him...to go back down HIS road...to return as prodigals to the arms of our loving Father.
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- Why does Jesus come to us...eventually to die upon a cross?
- For one reason: because of love. Jesus became flesh to walk among us, to teach us...to show us—and to give us--God’s tremendous love.
- For “...*God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*” (John 3:16).
- And to believe in Christ—to love Him—is to follow Him...follow the commandments to love God above all else...and to love our neighbor as ourselves. To cast aside grudges and forgive...for our being forgiven is contingent on we ourselves forgiving.
- And when we stand with Christ, St. Paul tells us: “...*neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” (Rom 8:38-1)
- In the end, what else really matters?
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- Jesus is born today for one purpose: that we can become saints.
- As St. Augustine wrote: “*What greater grace could God have made to dawn upon us than to make His only Son become the son of man, so that...through obedience, through goodness, through love...we might become sons and daughters of God?*”