

## **The Greatest Event on Planet Earth A Christmas Homily**

Virtually every period in human history is marked by a significant event, one that people remember and use to mark a turning point in the lives of men. Let us consider a few of them.

**The Fall of Adam** in the Garden – This plunged mankind into sin, misery and alienation from God.

**The Battle of Thermopylae**, in 480 BC – The Spartan King, Leonidas I, with his army of 7,000 men, held off the 150,000-man-strong Persian invasion for three days in a mountain pass, thus helping prevent Greece from becoming part of the Persian Empire.

**The Conquests of Alexander**, ending in 323 BC – by conquering most of the known world as far east as the Indus River, Alexander shifted the center from Orient to Occident and paved the way for Greek to become the *lingua franca* of the world. Later, this would greatly facilitate the spread of the Gospel.

**The Murder of Julius Caesar**, in 44 BC – this led to a civil war that effectively brought the Roman Republic to an end. The Empire followed, during which period the Lord Jesus was born.

**The Conversion of Constantine**, after the Battle of Milvian Bridge in AD 312. This led to the general Christianization of the Roman Empire and further facilitated the spread of the Gospel throughout Europe.

**The Murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria** in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. A breakdown in the peace efforts followed this event, and the Great War became inevitable. For three years thereafter, virtually all of Europe was engulfed in a cataclysmic war.

**The Abdication of Edward VIII**, on December 10, 1936, resulting from his decision to marry the twice-divorced American, Wallis Simpson. His abdication opened the door to the coronation of George VI, who turned out to be the perfect King to lead the people of England through the turbulent and very difficult years of World War II.

**The Invasion of Normandy** on June 6, 1944. This massive amphibious landing – the largest in history – allowed the Allies to establish a foothold in Fortress Europe. This led directly to the defeat of the European Axis Powers, bringing to an end the second cataclysmic war in Europe during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

All these events were world-changing and all of them are important to know about and remember. Moreover, we could list many other similarly significant occasions that affected the lives of many people around the world.

But today, we celebrate an event that is far more important, far more world-changing and even far more stirring and exciting than all of the aforementioned occurrences. Today, we celebrate the incarnation of the Son of God. The birth of Jesus Christ is the greatest event ever to occur on Planet Earth.

December 25, 2021

Think about it:

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Matthew 1:23, citing Isaiah 7:14

The name Emmanuel: "God with us." This constitutes a significant shift in God's dealing with mankind. Under the Older Covenant, God was manifestly "with us" only through His presence in the Inner Sanctum of the Temple (and in the portable Tabernacle prior to that).

Access to God's presence was limited. He could only be approached through Jerusalem and its sacrificial system. He was only accessible to the circumcision; regardless of ethnic or national origin, one had to adopt the yoke of circumcision to come to God. In short, one had to become a Jew.

But with the Incarnation, that changed. Now God's glory, previously restricted to one building in one city in one country, would be manifested throughout the world in a man who is also Divine. We see this in John's statement:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John 1:14

And in verse 18:

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

Not only did God reveal himself in a new and more universal way through the birth of Jesus, but the incarnation inaugurated the process by which atonement could be made, permanently, for the sins of God's people.

December 25, 2021

Consider the angel's words to Joseph:

Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to embrace Mary as your wife, for the One conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a Son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.

Matthew 1:21-22

That fact, that truth, ties us back in to the first item on the list with which I started this homily: the tragic event in the Garden of Eden. Jesus came to save us from our sins. Glory be to God in the Highest.

So, of all the memorable events in history, whether of a positive or negative nature in themselves, none can compete in their effect or their importance with this one amazing fact: The Son of God has become man. **Our Christmas celebration commemorates what is without doubt the greatest event ever to occur on planet earth.** No Christian should ever apologize for celebrating Christmas. Christmas is truly a day to shout **JOY TO THE WORLD, THE LORD HAS COME.**