

A 5-year old had a one-line play in the Christmas pageant. Appearing in angel's garb he was to say "Behold I bring you glad tidings." After rehearsal the little boy asked his mother what 'tidings' meant. "It means *news*," she replied. Well, at the performance, the boy forgetting his line recovered just in time to shout out, "boy, do I got news for you!"

How much like Isaiah from our first reading today, who could no longer be silent about the good news of Christmas! I can't think of many other faith traditions outside of Christianity who has an incarnate God, with flesh and blood, who leaves behind all the glory of divinity so as to embrace humanity as God has done for us and continues to do for us through the Church, the sacraments, through each one of us who are members of his Body: Emmanuel, God is with us. This is great news! After having formed the many wonderful things of creation, after making humanity in the image and likeness of God, after calling a people to be peculiarly his own and giving them freedom, land, descendants, covenants, and prophets, God realized that nothing could substitute for his presence. And so, God has become one of us. Our Gospel tells us just that, Jesus will come to us and save us from our sins. He is our Emmanuel, a title meaning "God-with-us." Today, God embraces humanity and intimately welcomes us into his family. God announces, "I'm here for you, and I will be with you to love you through each and every experience of your lives." *And so the Word was made flesh and dwells among us.*

There are many Christmas songs of this time of year that help us to share the good news about what the meaning of Christmas is all about, not simply about winter wonderlands and chestnuts roasting on an open fire. One of my Dad's favorites was "Do you hear what I hear." Perhaps the lyrics can lead us once again today on how to do just that.

"Said the night wind to the little lamb - Do you see what I see?"

A star, dancing in the night. We look to the stars with wonder, for guidance. The magi followed the star. We put a star on our Christmas tree. The star tells us of the wonder of God's love for us (it is dancing as it were). It reminds us that God is giving us guiding light even in the darkest of times. Whenever we feel lost, we just have to look around us and see that God is breaking into our world, that, even in hidden and small ways like the Christmas manger scene, that he is here with us. Despite all appearances, when decrees come out and inns seem crowded and nothing is going right, when we find ourselves put out into the cold, sometimes we just need to see with the eyes of faith, as the ever-shining stars remind us of God's presence in this life together with us as Emmanuel.

Said the little lamb to the shepherd boy - Do you hear what I hear?

A song high above the trees, with a voice as big as the sea. Music is the language of the soul. He who sings twice prays. Music helps us express our innermost being from love to anger, from joy to regret and sorrow. There are genres of music that each of us resonate with most. Christmas carries with it its own genre of music that lifts our spirits and fills us with joy. I am thinking of Polar Express that the ringing of the bell could only be heard by those who believe in the Spirit of Christmas. By the same token, for us who believe, the first gift of Christmas is the Christ-child born for us, God giving himself to us as Emmanuel. Do you hear what I hear - This is a heavenly choir of angels announcing the good news to the shepherds. We just want our prayers to be heard... Emmanuel is God's answer to our prayers, that a SAVIOR has been born for you. Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace! This is great news that will be for all people!

Said the shepherd boy to the might king – do you know what I know?

We are a society that predicates itself on information. Follow the science. Mass media and communications with Google at our fingertips allow us to learn and understand things in a greater capacity than ever before. And yet this avails itself to a clashing of opinions and disinformation. We could all use a little humility in our search for Truth. Do you know what I know said the shepherd boy to the mighty King. And the king listened to what this poor peasant had to say. A child shivers in the cold, let us bring him silver and gold. Jesus is the Truth – when we make ourselves out to be our own kings, and decide what truths we want to hold and defend, we will not be at peace. Jesus is the fulfillment of all things. This can be confirmed by your own experience – when something is not centered in God, when it leads us away from Jesus, that is not good news, that is not truth... we lose our peace. He is the savior not us. False promises by priests, by prophets, by kings have no power to save. The next product, human power, our sacrifices to health, technology, money, or whatever we idolize will not bring us happiness.

The song is an invitation: when you hear and see and know these things you pass it along, and a community is formed by these shared experiences and encounters. Indeed, you want others to hear what you hear, to see what you see, to know what you know. Do you hear and see and know these things too? This is just the beginning, we're just getting started. This child Jesus has a lifetime in front of him of ministry, and miracles, of grace, and power and resurrection. The world will never be the same. Come, be a part of the glad tidings of Christmas. Boy do I got news for you!