

There will be a meeting of the Board immediately after the Christmas service,' announced Reverend Morris.

After the close of the service, the group gathered at the back of church for the announced meeting. However, this Christmas there was a stranger in their midst. He was a visitor who had never attended their church before.

'My friend,' asked Reverend Morris, 'did you understand that this is a meeting of the Board?' 'Oh, yes,' came the rejoinder from the visitor, 'and after that sermon, I'm about as bored as you can get.'

Friends, I would like to welcome you all to Christ the King parish to celebrate together the feast of the incarnation. God becomes man. The word made flesh and dwelt among us. It is said that Joseph and Mary went into the inn asking for a space. The inn keeper said, "Can't you see the No Vacancy Sign?" Joseph turned to Mary said, "I told you to make reservations." Reservations or not, what you see in the Manger- is a child lying surrounded by his parents and the animals in the winter cold. What you see in the Manger is God in the form of a helpless child or God as a powerless little Babe. People sometimes romanticize the manger as we do at Church with golden fabric and flickering lights. The first Manger was real, dirty and stinky.

In the incarnation, our understanding of God and the way he relates to us takes on a new meaning. We say God is all-powerful. We say God is all knowing! We say God is Omni-present.. Does the babe in the Manger look all-powerful to you? Does the babe in the Manger look all knowing to you? Does the babe in the Manger sound Omni-present to you? And yet, our faith and our religion is founded on the incarnate God. St. Paul to the Philippians in 2:6 summarizes Who the God of Incarnation is: "though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness." God becomes one of us. Taking the form of a slave- God becomes the least among us. It is said, when St. Damian first ministered to the lepers, he used to address them as "You lepers" and then, he contracted Leprosy himself and then, he addressed them as "We lepers." The Incarnate God is one of us in every sense of the word. He made himself the least among us.

Thus, God all powerful embraces weakness to be one of us, God all knowing had to learn everything just like a child, so that his upbringing was same as ours, God Omni-present now limited himself by time and space, so that he could not be everywhere at the same time just like all of us. Dear friends, this is Christmas- This is the incarnation. In his infinite love, God steps outside of himself, truly embraces humanity with all its limitations and weaknesses, so that he could save us. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him." What stands out to

me about our God is that he is not sent into the world to judge the world, but to save it. And that's why the phrase "Who am I to judge" has captured the world all over- whether you are a Christian or not. We have Christmas, we have faith, we have Church, "not to judge the world," but to save it. God visited his people to save his people. Christmas is about our salvation.

The Persians tell a story about an unhappy king. In an attempt to find the answer to his dissatisfaction, he consulted his astrologers who told him he could find happiness by wearing the coat of a perfectly happy man. Immediately the king set out on his quest. He knocked at the doors of the very rich, for it seemed logical to find happiness there, but in vain.

He visited the institutions of higher learning, thinking the erudite must be happy in their wisdom. That, too, proved a dead end. Finally he stumbled across a common laborer singing at his work who confessed he was perfectly happy. "Sell me your coat," cried the king. "I'll give you a bag of gold for it." But the laborer only laughed and said, "I'd gladly give it to you, Sir, but I have no coat."

Our lives are like that. We are in search of the coat constantly- as if our happiness depends on the chances and changes of life. There is no magic coat. There is no magic wand. If you and I want to be happy- we must in the footsteps of our Incarnate God who stepped outside of himself, made himself the least among us with only one desire- to love and to save. We must put on the coat of love. In love, you and I must step outside of ourselves to save the world. "God so loved the world" And that's how we are known. We are Christians by our love. We are Christians by our kindness. We are Christians by our tolerance. We Christians by our sense of welcome.

Friends, it is a good time to be part of the Catholic Church. As a priest, I feel so good ministering in the Church today. For the reason, our Pope Francis is trying to walk in the footsteps of the Incarnate God. Pope Francis is trying to define Church by its love and mercy, inclusion and hospitality just as God defined the birth of the New Born Babe of Bethlehem as an act of love- not meant to judge but to save. He is calling on Church leaders and members to be missionary, less dependent on status and wealth, and more radical and pro-poor. My Christmas message to you is: Go forth and love as God loved us. Go forth and save as God has saved us.