

## CHRISTMAS EVE COMMENTARY 2007

Lots of people ogled Jesus along the way. There were plenty of rubbernecks as people slowed down to gawk. A good number even followed Him for a while, but eventually tired, grew distracted, or were offended by His words or plans or expectations. You are not a rare breed, those of you gathered to get a glimpse of Him in His manger. No, you are only a rare breed if this is not the only time you see Him, or one of the few, if you continue to walk with Him through the Church Year, through His life, from the wood of His manger to the wood of His cross, from the angels announcing His birth to the angels announcing His resurrection. Lots of people ogled Jesus along the way. A few truly followed Him. Which are you? Which will you be?

His mother looks on. What a sweet sight. Heaven glows with jubilation. The world seems right for a time. The infant Savior, wrapped in swaddling clothes, is the center of it all. He is so beautiful. He is a magnet for human eyes. Who can resist a baby to begin with? Who then could possibly resist this Baby who is at the same time God?

And then His mother looks on. Will you make it to this day? What a horrible sight. Heaven grows dark with sadness. The world seems more wrong than ever before, which is not an easy accomplishment. The grown Savior, naked and broken, is the center of it all. He is so ugly. He is repulsive to human eyes. Who can look at a tortured criminal to begin with? Who then could possibly maintain a steady gaze upon this tortured criminal, or so the authorities call him, who is at the same time God?

And then His mother looks on. Will you make it to this day? What a glorious sight. Heaven has stepped into the tiny room in which His few and confused disciples huddle. The world seems to have been to hell and back. The glorified Savior, risen and whole, is

the center of it all. He is so marvelous. He is more than human eyes can swallow. Who has ever seen a resurrected man to begin with? Who then can take in the sight of a resurrected man who is at the same time God?

If you don't know Him, as much as you may know, and as nice as you may be, you are damnably ignorant, and those who will not study in the school of the Savior will learn painful lessons in the devils' eternal detention. And you don't know Him if you don't know the whole story. You don't know Him if you don't know why He was born. You don't know Him if you don't know why He was crucified, why He has risen, why He has also ascended to the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

So let me tell you why: for you. Did you hear me? For you! All of it is for you and for your salvation. He wants nothing more than to see your face as He opens each part of His gift for you throughout the Church Year, as He gives you His birth, His epiphany, His Baptism, His suffering and death, His resurrection, His Ascension, His sending of the Holy Spirit, His second coming. To know Him is to know what He has done for you, for that is why He has done it all. He is not merely the Savior. He is your Savior.

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Be what He was born for you to be: be His, for where He is, there is your peace, for where He is, there is your salvation, for where He is, there is what you were meant to be, and, by God's grace, what you will be completely restored in some day: the image of God. Today is all for you, as is His cross, His empty tomb, and His seat at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, because Jesus is Jesus, He who saves His people from their sins, for you. Be the rare breed. Be the few. Walk with Jesus, because His little infant feet have quite the journey planned for you. That's right, for you. Amen.