

Christmas  
December 25, 2017  
Fr. Rick Lorenz

## Reflection

Last April I went on a pilgrimage to Israel. When we arrived in Bethlehem, I said Mass for the people at nearby Shepherd's Field. At this spot took place the events that we heard in the Gospel.

"In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night." The chapel was a cave, dim except for light that came in through the door; dim except for a lamp over the altar. Someone gave me a photograph from that Mass. By a trick of the light, an aberration in the camera lens, a ghostly glowing cross is seen shining from the lamp.

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them a light has shone." None of them had an iPhone to capture the image, but Luke tells us that the shepherds saw a few things that night: an angel of the Lord standing before them, the glory of the Lord shining around them. Their terror was relieved by his words: "Do not be afraid; for see - I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Christ, the Lord." They heard and saw even more: the heavenly host praising God. Creation from the realm of the spirit expressed joy in the realm of the flesh; angels sang before shepherds huddled on rocks surrounded by forgotten sheep.

Is 9:2-4, 6-7  
Ps 96  
Tit 2:11-14  
Lk 2:1-16

"Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us.' So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger."

Did it seem anti-climactic? An experience of the supernatural, followed by the sight of a baby? Luke assures us not: they made known what they heard, and Mary kept their words, pondering them in her heart. Then they "returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen." "The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all." They saw heaven enter earth so that we could know God's love. They saw the Word become flesh, so that we could become children of God. They saw God made man, and he would save us on the cross.

We are like those shepherds. We walk in darkness, but the Holy Spirit gives us hope. It's a land of deep darkness, but we follow the light of faith. Love calls us, and it relieves our fears, filling us with joy. Like the shepherds "glorifying and praising God," we will go forth to "declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous works among all the peoples." But first we will join the shepherds, kneeling before Jesus in the manger. "Rejoice before the Lord: for he is coming." We will see him in the Eucharist, the Lamb of God; his sacrifice made present; his body and blood become a holy meal; his soul and divinity offered to the children of God.