

Homily

When I was a child, in the fifties, there was no T.V. During Christmastime in the evenings we sat around the stove. In a corner of the livingroom was the crib. And my father read Christmas-tales to us. They were always about the victory of the good over the evil.

About a thief, for example, who repents. About lost children who find a new home. About misers who became generous on Christmas night. About the victory of love. Like in today's first reading from the prophet Jesaia, who told us about people in darkness who saw a great light and a new born prince of peace, who brings justice.

Even before christianity this midwinternight was a holy night. Our ancestors celebrated the return of the sun and believed that the gods visited the earth and miracles could happen.

One of the most moving miracle that ever happened was during the first Worldwar. There was a frontline through Europe. Soldiers lay in cold and wet trenches. Millions of young man had already been killed. It was Christmas eve. A Scottish soldier began to play a christmas carol on his bagpipe. A German started to sing: "Silent Night" and held up a shield above his trench. On it was written: If you don't shoot, we don't too! Hesitating, one by one, soldiers came out of their trenches and started to believe it was genuine. Their fear for one another changed into trust. Germans, French, Belgians, English shared cigarets with one another and showed each other pictures of their wives and children. A chaplain began a prayer and a service. And generals became more and more nervous about this spontaneous act of "peace on earth".

Dear friends, that is the power of Christmas. Only the believe that peace is possible can perform miracles, can create goodwill and a new world, as God meant it for us.

In those days when Caesar Augustus was emperor in Rome Mary gave birth to a child who did this miracle too, whole his life. Tonight we are here to look at Him. When we look at Him we see that peace is possible. Looking at a child changes us. You see yourself as you ever

were, tiny and vulnerable, asking for love. Looking at a child disarms us.

Maybe, that's why God came as a child among us. As that special child of Bethlehem, full of love and light. To disarm us. To appeal to us to become again His own image, just as He created us.

It happened when Augustus ruled Rome, when Hitler ruled Europe and our liberators came to set us free from that dictator and when young soldiers from over the sea celebrated Christmas here together before they went to the battlefields. We remember them here tonight.

It can happen in our present day too: while Obama still rules America, Putin Russia, Isis terrorises the world and Assad destroys Syria.

God comes among us again as a child. This is an appeal to every good and willing person. In order that miracles should continue to happen: peace on earth, trust in one another, reconciliation and life in solidarity.

May the God who became flesh and blood in Jesus, become flesh and blood in all of us, so that our world will be saved and less hard-hearted. We need it so much.

Merry Christmas.

