

WHY THE LITTLE WAY?

Of all the ways that God's Word could become flesh the actual being born in a stable outside an inn on the outskirts of the little town of Bethlehem is just so unlikely. Who would know? How will the world come to recognize and accept the Savior? How could God allow the ruthless, brilliant but thoroughly corrupt King Herod to try to destroy the child? Why allow the child to be placed in harm's way right at the beginning? This little one, like each little one, is so good and so vulnerable. If you were God would you not have designed something better for your beloved? Something safer? Something more protected? Why this way? Why this exposure?

Doesn't God know about the dark powers that are everywhere in our world? Always around, ready to tempt us, lure us, distract us, and threaten us? Doesn't God know that it seems to us the dark powers are increasing rather than diminishing? But God does know all of this. God is fully aware of the destructive power of evil. One of the very things that his Incarnate Word has been sent to do is to confront this dark power and to defeat it.

So, from the very moment of conception, from the very beginning, that threat has been most real. But as Jesus himself will proclaim one day—the gates of hell shall not prevail! Not against the child and not against the fully grown Jesus who will die on the cross. Death will never be able to hold Love Incarnate.

The child at Christmas will always be the sign that God risks. Yes. God does risk But God trusts and ultimately God triumphs. The dark powers will look and act menacingly but they will fail. The Christ child shall be saved and the forces of evil will be defeated. That is what the magi see that day. That is what their minds have been enlightened to understand. Christ is light. Christ is little. Christ is humble. And this combination of light, insignificance, powerlessness and humility will unleash that which the dark forces themselves truly fear. That is what John the Baptist pointed to.

As Father Joseph Ratzinger who would one day become Pope Benedict XVI said in a homily 60 years ago—***"In the end, the truly great does not lie in the size of the physical dimensions but in what is no longer measurable through what is physical. In truth, what is great by physical quantities is only a preliminary form of magnitude. The real and highest values occur in this world precisely under the sign of lowliness, hiddenness, silence. In Bethlehem, God who had chosen the small, forgotten people of Israel as His people, finally made the sign of littleness the decisive sign of His presence in this world... As a matter of fact, it is the tiny reality of the sacrifice of vicarious love, that turns out to be stronger than all the might of the strong, and that with this littleness in the end pervades and transforms the entire world.***

In the child of Bethlehem, this invincible power of divine love is drawn into this world. This Child is the only true hope of this world. But we are asked to take the risk with Him; to entrust ourselves to the God who made the small and the lowly as his sign. Our hearts are...filled with great joy this night for despite its appearance to the contrary it remains true. Christ the Savior is born!

May the Lord bless us today and give us his peace.