

Christmas II Year C 2010

In the name of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who wonderfully created the world,
and more wonderfully restored it.

I'm not sure if there is anything that evokes fear in us more than a lost child...even thinking of the possibility of one of our children disappearing in a crowd...in an airport...at the mall...at the beach....at an interstate rest stop... just thinking of the possibility engenders the seeds of panic. I can't imagine the torment of those families that appear on the Today Show from time to time chronicling the years apart from a child of theirs' who one day vanished....All of us who are parents, or who love children, which I guess is all of us, have felt this fear lurking in the darkness of the psyche...a cold malignant nothingness...It seems to me that such an occurrence, or even its possibility is the ultimate symbol of death in life, life lost...life devoid of meaning...an endless panic...a smoldering matrix of fear...a life even worse than death...death in life, Eliot calls it...an utter loss of control...loss of hope and loss of love...a veritable hell on earth, such a thing would be, would it not.

Using Mary's point of view, as Luke has done throughout the early going in this Gospel... Luke uses this dark backdrop of fear to tell the story of Jesus coming of age...who this Jesus is...what this Jesus means...heir of the prophets and patriarchs...full of the Spirit....growing in Wisdom for the good of all...this child...this hope.....and as the cancerous feeling of fear of losing a child is not lost on us, it is certainly not lost on Luke's audience, an audience in a world in which the life of a child is fragile at best....so the coming of age of this child...the very coming of age of this gracious new age is told up and against the near possibility of paralyzing fear, this death in life...such is the reality of every age...every age being stalked by the primordial fear of unknowing, fear of loss...fear up and against the light bearing potential of love and life coming of age...the dark and the light, forever in the cosmic dance of becoming....the universe amid dark and light beautifully expanding.

So the enemy then for Luke is fear...fear the thing that would undo us...In every appearance of God's envoys in this gospel...the first proclamation is what?...Fear not...fear not, the rudiment, the touchstone of the Good News....and of course the story resolves...things are restored...even after we are told that Jesus is missing for three days, the fear palpable...that in fact he isn't missing at all but found and found come of age...teaching and learning in the temple...in

his rightful place...the temple a symbol of the restored Israel, the known world as it should be...the world as it is meant to be.

This simple story then is a creation story, a story of making and restoring, the circle of life.... one of coming of age...a story of maturity... a story of enlightenment...a story of transformation....Jesus the archetype of the coming new way....the true way of earth and we in it...the way borne by the people of faith, the people of conscience...the church found and alive in its myriad manifestations....and the one who understands all this is Mary, her fear notwithstanding...She, the figure of Wisdom herself, the first mother, has known, in her spirit and body, knows, and has forever known the truth of the matters of earth...she sees the reality of what Jesus stands for...and we are told that she treasures this knowledge...she has understood from the beginning, her fear notwithstanding...that a new age dawns as we speak....a new age worth singing about, the song of songs from the stars....and where there is song there is no fear...the song that Mary sings depicts a world in its becoming...a world becoming as a song becomes...a world in which all manner of thing is made well...a world in which the poor and weak are raised to dignity....a world in which corrupt power and arrogance are brought to enlightened humility...a world in which there is food enough....and promise enough...and hope enough.....and, alas, sometimes this way seems lost...and fear foams in our souls...but there is good news this the evangelist tells us....that there is no such thing as lost...and there is no such thing as loss....only hope and potential, and enlightened growth always.

The angel of the Lord comes to us this day and bids us to fear not...for the child is not lost, but the child comes of age, full of enlightened grace and truth....Our very lives and labor, this child....our coming of age, full of truth....learning and teaching, serving, enabling the age that comes...the grace-filled age of kindness and justice...an age of mercy and nonviolence...an age in which love is the paradigm of reality...an age that is not, and will never be lost to us....an age in which fear is revealed as the illusion that it is...an age in which loving sacrifice comes to maturity....an age in which the hold of the great anxiety, the beast of fear, is broken.

Treasure that in your hearts, dear people of God...treasure the good news...treasure that we know the end of the story, and its means...that the child is not lost... that the child grows among us...the child, the new way of understanding and empathy...the new way of courage and

hope...a way in which our gifts are called forth, our charism....the true way of loving neighbor...the true way to love rightly ourselves....the true way to love rightly our world.

Brothers and sisters of this way, it is for us to nurture this child...It is for us to see that this child grows and flourishes and comes of age in our own time...for this child is the world's only hope...the hope that reveals the illusion of fear....the hope for a world set right at last...a hope that redeems the malignant nothingness that lurks amid the earth that God still to this day calls very good.

Treasure this good news...treasure this revelation...that nothing and no-one is ever lost, but forever found...found in a world that is forever being wonderfully created and forever being wonderfully restored. The glorious promise on the wings of Mary's song is one we can trust...and may we, bearers of the one song of the universe, grow in this treasureable knowledge.... that nothing is ever lost in the heart and mind of God...

Grow in Wisdom, people of the way, grow in Wisdom as grows this holy child...and let us live lives that tell all the world to be not afraid...and to treasure this good news forever.... We, the people of God, wonderfully created and yet more wonderfully restored....come of age at last...at last.