

Christmas 2025

Amid the darkness of this night – a light shines. And in the stillness and peace of our church, I invite you to let your eyes and your hearts rest for a moment on the manger before us. Because the greatest story ever told begins right here—not in a palace, not in comfort or security, but in a poor, fragile, ordinary shed.

This is not a story that begins with “once upon a time.” Because what we celebrate tonight [today] is not a fairy tale, it’s not a fable, nor a beautiful myth meant to make us feel warm for a moment – but it is a happily ever after story, lived out differently than any other. This is a true story. A living story. A story that continues...

Generation after generation...

Family after family...

We return to this manger—not simply because it’s tradition, but because it speaks to something deep within each of us whether we want to accept it or embrace it or not. It tells us who God is - and we’re reminded of who we are before Him and for others.

Tonight, we sing songs like *O Holy Night* and *Joy to the World* because they name what our hearts long for:

- Holiness—that is, a closeness to God.
- And joy—not a fleeting happiness, but a deep, steady gladness of heart that comes from trusting that God came for and will never let us go

What we see here, in this manger, a representation of Jesus’ birthplace...is the exact moment when God stepped into our world... He manifested His love in the hearts of ordinary people like us and He’s never departed from us ever since! And at the very moment God took on our humanity as He did through this beautiful child—He took on everything we are – including our weakness, our vulnerability, our struggles.

This tiny infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes, is not only a sign of hope, but hope itself.

So tonight [today], I invite us—just for a moment—to lay aside the worries we carry within us:

the pressures of life, the unfinished preparations for Christmas, the burdens of the year behind us. And place yourself here at the manger.

Let the peace of Christ settle into your hearts – and listen.

Christmas offers us one simple yet powerful truth:

God is madly in love with us. There's no reason for it. God just loves us!

That's why there is a world – and that's why each of us is here. And God has never stopped loving us, even when we human beings made a mess of things, and we did our best to forget about God's love for us.

But that's not all. God loves us **so much** that He wanted to be one of us, to show us the Way. In Jesus Christ, God became a human being not just to tell **us who and what God is**, but also to show us who and what we are supposed to be. Jesus was faithful to that mission even when it cost Him His life.

Humanity's journey with God began the moment the first human being came into existence, and our personal journey with God began the moment we came into existence. God loves us and He always has AND the Good News, Great News really is that God will never stop loving us.

The greatest sign of God's love came when our Lord & Saviour Jesus came into the world more than 2,000 years ago. God has loved us – GOD HAS LOVED YOU – since the very beginning, even when we turned away from Him... even when we forgot about God—He never stopped loving us.

We celebrate that God makes His home in our world – and that we reflect upon a manger, a creche like this more than 2,000 years later... Let's us know that home is where holiness and love began, and continues here in God's home here, and your homes too. The manger was home for the Holy Family on this holy night. And while many of us wish and hope for homes more perfect – we are reminded that faith, hope and love are what make a home special. Perfect is not something God expects of us – but that we keep working at it.

Friends, St. Bernadette's **is your home**, and it always will be – whether you're single, married, divorced – or "it's complicated", whether you're rich or poor– this is your home. Whether you're a soccer mom or hockey dad, Raptors fan, Argos fan, Jays fan, a Leafs fan, or even a Habs fan – this is your home. Whether you vote Conservative, the Green Party, Liberal or NDP – this is your home. Whether you're in recovery or still addicted – this is your home. You're welcome here

always if you wear your Sunday best or just jeans, whether you look or act like everyone else or like no one else – this is your home.

You're welcome here and this is your home if you've never been here before, or it's been a while or it's been a long, long time. You are welcome here if you struggle with faith or religion or are searching and seeking. This tiny little shed welcomed many who came to adore the Christ Child, there was no possible way they fit in the manger, and the wise men, the Magi, the shepherds and many others did not share the faith of Mary and Joseph, but they came to gaze upon the manger in wonder and amazement – drawn near by God Himself. They couldn't explain it then and we can't explain it now.

So, look around you tonight friends, with all these people crowding in [or if you're sitting in the Parish Hall because you couldn't get in here] – this is the way it's supposed to be. God is so happy we're all together like this... and God will always be here—waiting, welcoming, hoping you will come and see Him. And whatever your home looks like—whether full or quiet, joyful or complicated—remember what you see here tonight. God chose to be born into a family. Not a perfect family, but a holy one. A family that placed love as a gift He gave them at the center of their lives.

God chose simplicity. God chose humility. God chose love. And the greatest gift given to Jesus—and the greatest gift we can give one another—is love.

This story's not finished. It continues through us—every time we love, forgive, welcome, and choose kindness. Each day, we write the next chapter of the Christmas story.

May this be the story we model our lives upon.

Father