

**Parish of St. Joseph, Morningside**  
**Nativity of the Lord 2023**

---

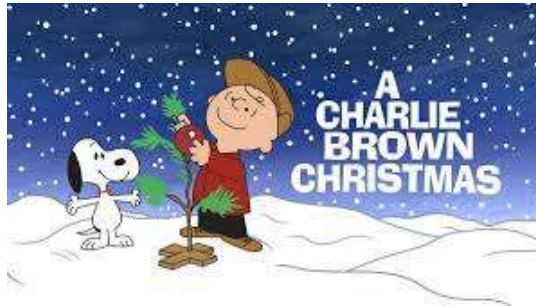
“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...” Is 9: 6-7

“For to you is born this day...a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.” Lk 2:10-11

---

- **A *Charlie Brown Christmas*** is a 1965 animated television special. It is the first TV special based on the comic strip *Peanuts*, by Charles M. Schulz.

- **SLIDE: A Charlie Brown Christmas**



- In the special, Charlie Brown finds himself depressed despite the onset of the cheerful holiday season.
- On their way to join their friends ice skating on a frozen pond, he confesses to Linus van Pelt that, despite all the things he likes about the Christmas season, he is still depressed. After Linus' reproach, and a put-down from Violet Gray, he visits Lucy van Pelt's psychiatric booth and tells her his problem. She suggests that he direct the group's annual Christmas play to get him involved, and he accepts.
- At the rehearsal, Charlie Brown finds a play fit for the 1960s with dancing, lively music, an uncooperative cast and a "Christmas Queen" (Lucy).
- Unable to control the cast, Charlie Brown decides the play needs a more "proper mood" and recommends a Christmas tree; Lucy suggests a big, pink aluminium tree, then sends him and Linus to get one.
- At the tree lot, Charlie Brown picks the only real tree there, a small sapling. Linus questions his choice, but Charlie Brown believes that once decorated, it will be perfect. When they return, however, Lucy and the others scorn him and the tree and walk away laughing.
- Crestfallen, Charlie Brown loudly asks if anyone knows what Christmas is all about:  
**SLIDE: Play video** <https://youtu.be/eff0cqYefYY?si=jTi1eW-mPq-tC0lk> (*Linus says he does, walks to centre stage, asks for a spotlight, drops his security blanket, recites the annunciation to the shepherds, picks up his blanket, returns and says, "That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown."*)
- This evening, the angels pierce the quite of the night with that announcement to the shepherds and to you and me!

- “Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord...”
- **SLIDE: Painting of the Angels and Shepherds**



- In 1739, Charles Wesley composed the famous Christmas Carol: Hark! The Herald Angels Sing to celebrate this important announcement:

Hark! The herald angels sing,  
 "Glory to the new-born King;  
 Peace on earth, and mercy mild,  
 God and sinners reconciled!"  
 Joyful, all ye nations rise,  
 Join the triumph of the skies;  
 With th'angelic host proclaim,  
 "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

- Imagine how the shepherds must have felt – terrified, I would guess!
- But they might also have wondered: **“For me – a Saviour born FOR ME?!”**
- So, when the angles leave, the shepherds go to find their Saviour...they don't think twice about it!
- They run to find their miracle, knowing and believing that Jesus was God's gift to them...
- **“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...for to us is born this day a Saviour!”**
- And that is why the message of Christmas is so important:
  - The coming of Jesus shows us our most important need in life...
    - We need a Saviour!
- A Saviour who drives out our fears.
  - We fear nothing because Jesus is born.
  - He is one of us, he feels our pain and sorrows and ultimately carries our sins upon himself on the cross

- The message from the angels is not that we should muster up some courage! We are to “*be not afraid*” because of what God is doing in and through his son.
- A new reality, a new kingdom is breaking through...a kingdom of love and joy which challenges the kingdoms of fear that dominate our world today!
- A Saviour who replaces fear with joy – the joy of the Gospel!
  - The opposite of fear is not security it is joy!
  - The promise of Christmas is not one of security, wealth or comfort. In fact, the baby of Bethlehem and the holy family embody the opposite: they were poor, powerless, and without a place to stay. Yet imagine how deep their joy and wonder must have been when Jesus was born.
  - In the midst of hardship and anxiety, joy is born in Jesus.
- A Saviour who transforms our world
  - The joy we have tonight is active and transformative...
  - The shepherds, when they heard the news, scrambled over the hills to Bethlehem. There they met Jesus and then returned “*glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen*”.
  - They were changed by the joyful news they had received from the angels!
- St. Augustine, preaching a Christmas Eve sermon, said: “*...for your sake, God became man. You would have suffered eternal death, had he not been born in time...You would have suffered everlasting unhappiness, had it not been for his mercy. You would never have returned to life, had he not shared your death. You would have been lost if he had not hastened to your aid. You would have perished had he not come. Let us then joyfully celebrate the coming of our salvation...*”
- When the angels speak to simple shepherds, they don’t speak a list of commands or instructions...
  - they announce that God has come...
- And that news gave the shepherds a joy that was boundless and full.
- That is what Christmas is all about...
  - Jesus our Saviour has come to us.
    - We are now free to love, serve and worship...we are no longer slaves to our fears!
  - Glory to God in the highest and peace to people of goodwill!
  - Merry Christmas!