



Allocutio



Presentata Curia 20th December 2012

Allocutio: Emmanuel, a name which means "God is with us".

We probably feel a great need in us for these reassuring words at the moment. I can assure you that we would do well to take them on board because at a time like this when not only are the days dark but the times we live in too are dark we need to know, and it is true, that we are dear to the heart of God and that he is with us.

The world the Lord Jesus came into was good in some ways. The Pax Romana ruled bringing a one unified political and economic world from the Cheviots to Persia, from North Africa to areas beyond the Black Sea. But it was rule from outside, a rule imposed by an iron fist that showed no mercy to those who asked questions. Sparticus and his 6000 men were all crucified till the birds ate their bodies from the crosses. Christians and others who did not conform would get similar fates centuries later. That was part of its dark side.

And Jesus was born into a time of great peace when a stable world allowing great trade across a huge area. And this facilitated a lot of the journeys Jesus did. Jesus does give the impression of being open to others from that greater world outside the world of the Jews. This world also allowed the early disciples to travel very far and proclaim the Gospel. And theologians and others have noted the aptness of St. Paul's words, "At the appointed time God sent his son, born a subject of the law, born of a woman". The time was right.

Many Jews in previous ages and maybe many genuine god-fearing people before Abraham's time, might have wondered if the time was not then ripe for God to intervene. But the time was not right. And we need always to recall that God has his own ways and times and is so much bigger than us. We fail to see his work as we get lost in our minutiae.

It is after all God's world and his power is always at work, something greater than the mighty of this world who think they are something. By his power Orion appears in the sky each year and the tide comes in and out reminding us of who is Big Boss. Even in human nature his ways are so well sewn that when people deviate there is a kick-back. He is always the Good Shepherd, if you like, the hound of heaven, chasing us down until we bow to his will. How many have had this sin or that sin come back at them as they damage their health or get embroiled in greater difficulties so that he teaches them his law through the road of hard experience? As he said himself, "Those who live by the sword will die by the sword" or "whatever is hidden will be revealed" or "by their fruits you will know them". If it brings them back good. Our conversion makes up for our past sins.

We have seen a lot of darkness over the last while. Why would anyone even contemplate the bringing in of laws to allow the killing of babies? Kate Middleton was barely two months pregnant and they speak of the "Royal Baby" already awaited with expectation. This season of Advent speaks of the human persons of the Baptist and Jesus being there from the moment of conception. But the politicians who urged us to vote on a referendum to protect children now want a law to allow killing other children and maybe even allowing the flimsiest of reasons to permit so. They focus on the woman but seem to be shutting their hearts to another human being who is defenceless and utterly vulnerable. And as a doctor agreed with me this morning: is there any thought at all of the cruelty the baby suffers in abortion? The whole world rightly gets upset at the slaughtering of 6 and 7 year olds in a school. But we must not even think of the baby who is just 6 or 7 weeks or a bit more in its mother's womb! This too is darkness.



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It may seem to us: Where is God? But God is always with us. A law which so goes against God's will and promotes evil will kick back against all those who avail of it not to mention those who instituted it. Hopefully so that they will repent of what they did. But those who choose to remain bound by God's law and who speak to others about his better ways will find God is with them. This is a time when our Catholic faith with its wholesome and rounded value pack, so to speak, must be presented as so much more healthy. As St. Paul said again, "Generous sowing gives a generous harvest; sparse sowing will bring sparse fruits".

Let us recall also what St. Paul said, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" No matter what happens God is with us and we are on the right side which will win out even if it takes decades. He understands the sufferings and anxiety that we are going through and He is with us. God is with us in our fidelity to him, he is with us in our efforts to protect the unborn, he is with us in every way we try to live according to his laws and promote them. He is with us whenever we are reviled in his name.

One thing we must never forget. We must continue to reflect God's light, the positive and the good ways. People will always live in a world of shadows and darkness in some form or other but they will also be far more attracted to the good and the decent. And we must never forget that sometimes and indeed mostly that the personal contact by a friend or family member whom people know to be decent will have more effect for good than any discussion on the media. Because God is with us we will always be upbeat and have a joy in us which will make us shine out as lights in the world. And let us never forget that God loves everyone, even those who do not believe him or who ignore him. If we keep God close to us we will be people through whom God's light will shine on everyone.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill