Nativity of the Lord

On 25th December, we observe the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord. Since the fourth century, Christians have marked this day as the beginning of the Christmas season.

Second only to Easter, Christmas is one of the most important days in the Church. The Nativity tells the story of Jesus's birth in Bethlehem. Because there was no room at any of the inns due to the census, Jesus, the saviour of the world, was born in a stable. After Jesus's birth, Angels proclaimed him as a saviour for all, and shepherds went to the stable to adore him.

In the 40 days before Christmas, we participate in Advent, a time of spiritual cleansing and preparation for the birth of Jesus.

The Nativity of Jesus celebrates the incarnation of God, which means that he came to earth to live as a man and undo the damage caused by the fall of the first man, Adam.

And this is the crux of why we celebrate Christmas: because it allowed us to receive God's grace. There is nothing we can do to earn salvation. None of us will measure up. And yet, God offers his grace as a free gift.

Christmas serves as a reminder that God continues to love us, no matter what we do or who we are. It is not about acting the right way, or always doing the right thing. God's love is constant. It is unconditional.

Matthew 2:10 says that when the shepherds saw the star proclaiming the saviour's birth, "they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy."

As Christians, we can share in this great joy. Joy does not refer to "happiness at all times." Happiness is fleeting and depends on circumstances. There are many Christmases where it feels there is nothing to be happy about.

However, joy is something that comes from God. We experience joy because of what God has done for us and is sustained by him. Only sin can remove joy from our lives.

Will you feel that kind of joy this Christmas? Are you able to rejoice exceedingly with great joy, not matter the circumstances?

Joy is available to all Christians. We can pray for it and acknowledge the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives. We need only ask for this kind of endless joy.

This Christmas, pray that you experience the joy of the Lord in your life and are able to praise God for the many gifts he has given you. On behalf of St. Paul's RC Church, Cramlington, we wish you a very happy, holy and merry Christmas!