

New Year's Eve
December 31, 1988
Saturday at 11:45pm
At the New Year's Eve party of John and Carleen Krey
Rattlesnake Road, Andover, Massachusetts

Texts: Psalm 102:24-28
Jeremiah 24:1-7
1 Peter 1:22-25
Luke 13:6-9

Actually I've learned that our New Year really begins with Advent. That is centered in the fact that the birth of Christ child will make all things new. And our time will be new therefore as well. Today therefore is the Sixth or Seventh day of Christmas! Happy six-geese a-laying or seven swans a-swimming! But celebrating is still in order because even our secular calendar is dated from the birth of our Lord. We are entering the year 1989 A. D. "Anno Domini". That means 1989 years after the birth of Christ. But what is the meaning of a new year?

These years are passing more and more quickly. When we are very young it seems forever before a year passes. But the older we are the faster years run.

Oftentimes we stop and look at ourselves and we even might make New Year's resolutions - but it requires much discipline to act on them - more perhaps than we have. And perhaps we have things we really want to do lying on the side undone, and we are doing things we really don't want to be doing. This can give us a feeling of emptiness, of fruitlessness about how we have spent our time, because spending it we are, and by the marks of another year rolling around, we know that God will call us out of one of these years, and then the course of our lives will have been run.

But the new year on the calendar is not going to make any difference really. We will be the same people in 1989 that we were in 1988. Nor will our New Year's resolutions. Sometimes we make the wrong resolutions, or expect to fulfill them out of our own strength rather than God's grace. We need to be made new, for us to have a new year. The newness of 1989, of a new year comes not from the calendar, but from the fact that Jesus was born, who is Emmanuel. And when God comes to us, he comes bringing a new time. When God is with us, his time is with us. Eternity breaks into our time. That is why even in this time of the year when the nights are so long, the darkness will not overcome the light. These may be our shortest days and years, but we proclaim that the time that flies is not the only time there is!

What's necessary for us is to be born anew out of his Holy Birth. Each of us needs to have our Holy Nativity. Each of us needs our own "Little Christmas". I like to point to the beautiful poinsettias in this season, and make each festooning blossom represent a holy birth that has made you new, that has made me new. After our own Holy Nativity we are new creatures, and we will enter a new year, a new day, a new time...

And when the Lord comes to his garden, his fig tree orchard, looking for fruit, and finds none...then Christ intercedes for us. "Let me pour all my grace upon this person one more year, one more time." (Luke 13.v.6-9) If you come in 1990, and still find none, then you can take the tree down.

But Christ is giving us one more chance this year of our Lord 1989. He is pouring all his grace over us, attending and caring for us so that by his grace we might bear much fruit, fruit that abides. Amen.

After thought: Time goes forward and time comes to an end. But in Christ time goes to the new beginning, to the world without end. Amen.

Time that proceeds to the creation, is fruitful time. In my Christmas sermon I related the creation to redemption. Out of Christ's Holy Birth comes a new birth of the world. The old creation comes to an end, and through Christ God makes all things new. And time goes backward, so that the end will be the new beginning of the earth, the new creation. From this the logic follows that Christ is the second Adam and Eve, that the heavens opened and the gates of a second paradise are flung open. Not the paradise of innocence now, but the paradise of forgiveness. And original sin is erased, and primal good or perhaps better, holy communion takes its place. Therefore all things will be new.

Let us accept the new year as Christ has made it new for us. The Holy Nativity in the Prologue of John is for the sons and daughters of God, who are born, not of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God... born anew of the water and the spirit. This is the little Christmas in our own personal biographies. We become the new people of the new Kingdom coming. Not only are there signs of it to which we witness, but by grace we also make new signs of it for others. Christ by his new Kingdom in his new time renews the earth. It is Christ born in us capable of accepting God's grace fruitfully, which replenishes the earth.

The above was actually the end of my first draft, which time did not allow for in the quick moments before the ball dropped in Time Square signifying the new secular year...1989.