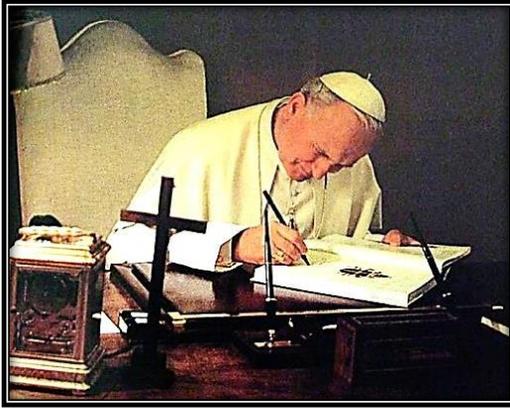




Angels We Have Heard On High



“Remember the past with gratitude, look forward to the future with confidence, live the present with enthusiasm.” That inspired instruction was delivered by *His Holiness Pope John Paul II to the Bishops, Clergy, and Lay Faithful at the close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000* in the *Apostolic Letter Novo Millennio Ineunte* (6 January, the Solemnity of the Epiphany, in the year 2001). Seventeen years later, they provide me, the Pastor of Our Holy Redeemer in Freeport, with an opportunity to take readers back in time; not all the way back to 2001, not even back to 2008 when I arrived in Freeport and began making regular use of that inspired instruction in homilies and sermons, invocations and benedictions, messages and letters from the Pastor, but only as far back as 24 December and 25 December 2017!

The morning of 24 December brought us back to Mass for the *Fourth Sunday of Advent*, where we lit the fourth Advent candle (purple), and heard the Archangel Gabriel say to the Blessed Virgin Mary: “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God” (Saint Luke 1:30). Shortly thereafter, at 4:00 P.M. on that very same day, many of us returned to Mass for the *Vigil Mass of the Lord’s Nativity* and heard the Angel of the Lord say to Saint Joseph: “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home” (Saint Matthew 1:20b). And, within a very few hours after that, we arrived *home* for the *Mass of the Lord’s Nativity* at Midnight, placed the Babe into the manger and heard the Angel of the Lord say to shepherds keeping the night watch over their flock: “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people” (Saint Luke 1:10).



Mary, Saint Joseph, and the Shepherds all heard the angels say: “Do not be afraid”, and heeding that instruction, the way was prepared for the life of Christ to take flesh and dwell amongst us. That instruction opened the way for Mary to conceive and give birth to the good news of great joy for all the people. That instruction opened the way for Saint Joseph to protect the good news of great joy for all the people. That instruction opened the way for the shepherds to seek and find the good news of great joy for all the people.

If the good news of great joy for all the people is to be conceived, birthed, sought, and discovered in 2018, then the angelic instruction must be renewed in our hearing. *Do not be afraid* to turn to Mary in 2018 and find the way to conceive the life of Christ within you and to give birth to that life in your relationships with others. *Do not be afraid* to turn to Saint Joseph in 2018 and find the way to protect the life of Christ within you and in others. *Do not be afraid* to turn to the Shepherds in 2018 and find the way to glorify and praise God for the life of Christ you have sought and discovered within you and others! *Do not be afraid* to turn to the Angels in 2018 and find the way to tell others: **Do not be afraid**; because after all, the good news of great joy is: *for all the people*.