



Wednesday Prayer

Christmas – The first ones to share the Good News

**In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord.
Luke 2:8-11**

Bishop Philip Hougen, former bishop of the Southeastern Iowa Synod, tells of an experience he had on one of his many trips to the Pare Diocese in Tanzania as part of the synod's Companion Synod relationship. It was an encounter with a group of young goat herders who were driving a herd of goats past him as he sat outside preparing a sermon for the following day. They were anxious to talk to this white guy from another country. It was a chance to practice their English and find out what was in the book he was reading. He gladly interrupted his study time, and thought quickly about what he could share from the Bible that they might find relevant. The shepherds in the Christmas story came to mind, so he opened to this passage in Luke 2, pointed to each word, and they would repeat the words after him. When he came to “shepherds”, he pointed to them and said, “like you” and held up one finger, “first ones”, and then “Baby Yesu”.

He had no idea how much they understood about what he told them, but they were excited and engaged in the story. The irony didn't escape him that he may have been the “first one” to share the story of Jesus' birth with the goat herders in a faraway country. He took the time to share the good news of Jesus birth with these young boys, even though he didn't speak their language, and was many years older than they were.

We all need to be alert to the opportunities to be the “first one” to share the good news of great joy, the “Baby Yesu” with everyone, especially young people. We might be tempted to shy away, thinking that they wouldn't want to talk to an older person, someone who doesn't “speak their language”, or that they wouldn't want to talk about faith. But they just might be a young person desperate for a welcoming word from a caring adult who offers them hope and light in our world.

Emmanuel, God with us, you sent angels first to young shepherd boys with the good news of great joy, your coming to us as a baby in a manger. As we celebrate your incarnation, enter our hearts, fill us with such joy that we are compelled to share this good news with young people and others in all that we say and do. Amen.

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