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Good News!

December 25, 2011: NATIVITY OF THE LORD
Midnight: Is 9:1-6 / Ti 2:11-14 / Lk 2:1-14
Dawn: Is 62:11-12 / Ti 3:4-7 / Lk 2:15-20
Day: Is 52:7-10 / Heb 1:1-6 / Jn 1:1-18 or 1:1-5, 9-14

This may not seem like the most seasonally appropriate comment, but I really dislike camping. I love the outdoors during the day, but give me a hotel bed at night. Others see camping in a much different light, but for me it involves too much dirt, too little sleep, and an unfortunate lack of electricity and running water. I don't need the Ritz, but camping is just too bare bones for me.

This is why I'm so struck by the Greek translation of the verse from John's Gospel we hear at Christmas Mass during the day: "And the Word became flesh and pitched his tent among us" (John 1:14). *Pitched his tent among us*. Not an RV. Not a camper. Not a hotel room. Simply a tent. Bare bones. Vulnerable.

This is how God chose to come—and come *among* us. Not over us. Not above us. *Among* us. It's as completely simple and completely mysterious as that.

In the weeks leading up to this wonderful day, we've certainly been surrounded by and probably participated in much feasting and purchasing and planning—some of it to excess, for sure. Many presents were bought, festive parties planned, special food prepared. It's good and right to celebrate with friends and family and to share our blessings generously with those in need.

But the deepest truth of what we celebrate today is that God came among us in simplicity. There was little fuss, just a poor couple in a poor place. The divine tent was pitched in the dirt where animals slept.

God came as a vulnerable, helpless child—a mystery as old as the ages, but ever new each Christmas. Celebrate it well today. Merry Christmas!

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