“Today is born our Savior, Christ the Lord.” The Church proclaims these words in the refrain of the Responsorial Psalm for the Night Mass of Christmas. We hear these words each year and we are invited once again to ponder the mystery of God becoming one with us in Jesus. Drawing on several images from the Scripture readings for this Mass, I would offer the following thoughts for reflection.

First, how did God come to us? God came as a child; in smallness and simplicity. God came in a way that made it difficult to fear God. He came to us as a child needing love. God did not come in any extravagant way or with great grandeur. And by coming in simplicity, God shows us how God very often reveals Himself to us … in small, sometimes hidden ways. The Gospel tells us that after Jesus was born, Mary “wrapped Jesus in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.” All of us can identify with the image of a gift that has been wrapped and given to us. I was once stationed in a parish where every year a certain person would give me the same gift. A sweater! Sweaters are great gifts. But we all know that sweaters, much like other pieces of clothing, run their course and we get rid of them because fashions change or we outgrow them. The celebration of Christmas reminds us that God has given us an eternal gift, a gift that lasts, a gift that continues to come to us “wrapped” in various ways. God comes to us in the
blessing of family and friends, in the successes of children and grandchildren, in the Eucharist we receive and in the other Sacraments we celebrate. Today’s celebration offers us an opportunity to give thanks to God for all the people and events in our lives through which God continues to reveal His presence to us.

Second, to whom did Jesus come? He came to the shepherds, to those who were “keeping watch” over their flock. They were the first to whom it was announced that a savior had been born. It was not to the proud and mighty to whom God first revealed Himself, but to simple and lowly ones. God continues to reveal Himself to those who seek Him, to those who wait for Him, to those who are open to receiving His message of love, peace, justice and forgiveness. The message offered to the shepherds is offered to us this night. “Do not be afraid, for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all people. For today, in the city of David, a savior has been born for you, who is Christ and Lord.” Whatever fears we hold within us, those fears are given meaning in and through the One who has come to walk with us and save us, Christ the Lord.

Third, when did Jesus come? He came in the darkness and quiet of the night. And His coming this way fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah proclaimed in the First Reading: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom, a light has shone.” Isaiah presents us with the contrast of darkness and light. We are reminded through his words that God comes as a source of hope and light to those who believe. God comes to strengthen us in the darkness of our lives; the darkness of sin, sickness, estranged relationships, pride and violence. We pray this night that God will touch and heal any and all darkness in us and in our world. Our thoughts are especially with those who have experienced losses during the last year. In particular, we pray for victims of gun violence, those who mourn
the loss of their loved ones and those affected by the hurricanes. For it is the light of Jesus, the Christ, born in Bethlehem that gives us hope and strength.

“Today is born our savior, Christ the Lord.” We gather this day to give thanks for the gift of God coming among us in Jesus. Through His coming among us in human form, we affirm the goodness of human life, and remind ourselves that life is sacred and to be respected and reverenced. As people of faith, we are ultimately invited again and again to ask ourselves: What difference does the birth of Jesus make in our lives? CHRIST HAS BEEN BORN so that you and I can be REBORN to love, to light, to truth, to oneness with God and each other. Let me end with a quote from Dorothy Day that was part of a message in a Christmas card I recently received: “I am so glad that Jesus was born in a stable. Because my soul is so much like a stable. It is so poor and in unsatisfactory condition because of guilt, falsehoods, inadequacies and sin. Yet, I believe if Jesus can be born in a stable, maybe he can also be born in me.” Have a blessed Christmas!