

Good afternoon (evening / morning) and Merry
Christmas! My name ---- is Father Matthew
Brumleve – the pastor here at St. Jude / St. George ---
and I say this not just for the benefit of our guests
today – but also for our regular parishioners. . .

Because throughout Advent, I gave up the ambo
at the time of the homily to various guest speakers –
traveling companions we found in each of the first
readings.

So today, instead of Jeremiah, Baruch,
Zephaniah, or Micha ---

You just have me – Fr. Matthew – the gift of
God. . .

But – I still want to share a story – just as our guest shared their stories. . .

Once upon time, there was a mother who had twins when her oldest child was a senior in high school. The woman was surprised by the births and certainly happy – for she loved all of her children.

The twins were so cute and so lively – she figured they’d keep her young.

But alas for her – as the twins began to grow – they turned into absolute monsters!

They fought with each other, as well as with their friends and their older siblings.

The lied and cheated and stole and deliberately broke all kinds of things.

Whenever the two of them outnumbered another child, they beat up on them –and then swore to their mother that the other child started the fight.

They never studied in school. They tormented their teachers. They were mean and nasty to their parents and the other adults in their lives.

Their mother did her best, but certainly had her hands full with these two. She simply could not control her – adorable – but vicious -- little hellions!

The summer the twins were fourteen, they stole their mother's car and totaled it in an accident. They ended up in the hospital where they made life miserable for the nurses and the doctors.

When the parish priest came for a visit – he suggested to the mother that she send them off to boarding school – he knew of a nice place run by some very strict religious sisters in Indiana --- although he thought a place with barbed wired and cut glass on tops of the walls might be a better place for them!

The mother would hear none of this. “No,” the mother said, “I would miss them too much if they weren’t home with the rest of us. . . I’m their mother – *and I love them.*”

And that’s exactly the way it is with God and us. No matter what we do. No matter how far we stray – God loves us!

When we choose to do things our way – rather than God way --- God loves us!

When we choose to walk in the darkness of sin rather than the glorious light of Christ – God loves us!

When we yoke ourselves to the values and ways of the world – rather than to Christ and the values of the kingdom of God – God loves us!

Especially when we don't deserve it – can do nothing to earn it, certainly cannot buy it --- God loves us!

In the fullness of time – this Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace – the one we call our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ --- came to us as a sign of God's tremendous love for us --- became for us the very face of God's mercy.

And when God chose to enter the world – God chose to come not as a powerful leader of an invading army – but came quietly, and hardly noticed as a tiny, little baby – not born in some great palace in a great city --- but in an animal’s feed trough – in the little town of Bethlehem.

And the mother of that tiny, little baby was not to be some wealthy or prominent woman – but the poor and obscure Mary --- from a bump in the road hill-country town of Nazareth.

God comes to us – because no matter what – God loves us! We don’t earn it or deserve it. And the only thing we can do in response to this great gift of God’s love ----- is to live our lives in gratitude for it.

Rejoice, Rejoice. Emmanuel –

Has come to thee – O Israel. . .