

- As we enter yet another new year, the liturgy turns our minds toward the circumcision of our Lord 8 days after His birth.
- This was a Jewish custom that symbolized the covenant made by God with the Jewish people, a covenant in which God promised His Chosen People that He would be their God, and they would be His people, the flock He shepherds.
- Indeed, the importance of this covenant was such that the Jewish men were physically marked, scarred in their flesh, so that they might never forget the promises made between God and them.
- Yet, original sin has made man fragile, fickle, and forgetful. Thus, despite this physical reminder of their covenant, the Jewish people were not always faithful to our Lord and broke their covenant with Him.
- And even when prophets were sent to call them back to God's ways, they often beat and killed those holy men.
- But after allowing them to suffer the consequences for turning away from Him, our Lord would always take them back and renew His covenant with them – such is His mercy.
- Yet, even when our Lord sent them His Son, their long-awaited Messiah, to form that new and everlasting covenant, the chief priests and leaders of the Jewish people rejected their Savior and handed Him over to Pilate to be crucified.
- Despite His preaching and teaching, the many healings and exorcisms He performed – even raising people from the dead – the leaders of the Jewish people rejected our Lord.
- Their blindness and hardness of heart were astounding. Yet, that is the power of the darkness of sin that I preached about last week on Christmas.
- Concupiscence, coupled with proud and willful vice, always leads to disaster.
- This is why I challenged you on Christmas as to whether or not you truly recognize the darkness of sin in your life... whether or not you are horrified by sin.
- Sadly, our human history has shown that most of us do not recognize the terrible-ness of sin. Most of us have consciences that are not as well formed and sensitive as they should be.
- For even though we have been baptized and are accounted as Christians, we are not immune to concupiscence's crippling. Christians commit sin just like anyone else.
- And that's why we need a Savior! Indeed, the incarnation and birth of our Lord, and subsequent passion and death, have changed everything for mankind.
- That salvation is now a possibility is precisely what we celebrate at Christmas! We are not simply recalling some charming events that surrounded the birth of Jesus.
- We are celebrating and giving thanks for the fact that a Messiah was born unto us, and that because of His Incarnation and birth, we can be saved from the darkness of sin.
- Of course, with this gift of salvation comes the charge to live soberly, justly, and uprightly in this world. As St. Paul tells us in his Letter to Titus:

*For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope: the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who*

*gave Himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for Himself a people of His own who are zealous for good deeds (Titus 2:11-14).*

- So, now that our Lord has appeared in the flesh, we are to live in hope of our salvation, doing good deeds as we await our Lord's coming again at the end of time.
- Easier said than done, right?
- We live in a world today that – it seems – is becoming darker and more hardened in sin with each passing year. So many people today have no desire to know or serve God, and their selfish, sinful actions show that.
- Not only are divine and natural law now rejected as outdated, but a new, politically-correct and woke morality has viciously supplanted them. And those who push back against the tyranny of this new morality are condemned as haters and bigots.
- As we see this moral darkness all around us, it can be tempting to despair. It can be tempting to think that this darkness can never be overcome. It can even be tempting to think that the only way to get through this life is to surrender to the darkness.
- But those are all lies from the evil one.
- My dear brothers and sisters, the point of the Christmas mysteries is to remind us that there is a Light shining in the darkness, a Light that the darkness cannot overcome! That Light is Christ!
- And while we may feel overwhelmed with this present darkness all around us, we must hold fast to Christ our Light through hopeful prayer, through our worthy participation in the Sacraments, and through virtuous living.
- Yes, the world is dark and really messed up today, but it's no time to be jaded or sad. No, it's a time for us to be more faithful and fervent than ever! Now more than ever, we must let the light of Christ shine through us into this dark world of ours.
- While we still struggle with our own darkness and sin, we cannot let that get us down.
- Rather, we must look at our temptations and struggles with sin as occasions to grow in humility and in the recognition of just how much we need Jesus – and that we can't live as we should without Him.
- And we must turn to Our Lady as both our model and our intercessor, relying upon her maternal intercession to procure for us every grace we need to live with Christian integrity.
- Brothers and sisters, we're at the start of a new year – a time in which we often make resolutions to live better, holier lives.
- Let us resolve first to know our sins and hate them, especially those sins that are habitual – those sins that we commit with so little thought or care. Let us resolve to be more vigilant in fighting them.
- Let us also resolve also to not become jaded, cynical, or despairing as we look upon the darkness in our world. Rather than surrendering to the darkness of this world, let us surrender to Jesus by being more prayerful and virtuous.
- And let us go to Our Lady, trusting that the Mother of God is our mother, too, in the order of grace, and that with her help, we can shine brightly with the light of Christ in our dark world.
- Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death. Amen!