

# Christmas Eve Homily 2024, The Rev. Robert B. Wood, Church of the Good Shepherd, Cashiers, NC

'Tis the night before Christmas, so why not a rhyme?  
Clement Moore penned a version way back in his prime.  
He metered a story of a jolly old elf,  
The one traversing chimneys, not perched on a shelf.

This houseguest spoke not a word but went straight to work,  
Bringing joy, stuffing stockings, and sharing a smirk.  
As much as Moore's story enchants with emotion,  
An infant visitor deserves more devotion.

So I'll endeavor once more with verse and great cheer,  
to jingle good news of our Messiah so dear.  
Mistake not form or my prose as some fancy jest.  
We're all here to give God heart, soul, and best.

A return—if that's fair—for God's incarnate gift,  
Bequeathed quietly, humbly when most were adrift.  
The usual culprits had led people astray.  
False idols caused havoc back then as today.

Pride, greed, and lust undermine our God-given nature;  
Frustration and anger stream from poor legislature.  
Could we save ourselves from back-sliding and danger?  
"No is the answer," said the babe in the manger.

Only God can correct the design-flaw within,  
With glory and grace He absolves us of sin.  
Word becoming flesh fashions our story tonight,  
a visit enduring, lasting past our short sight.

St. Nick and sleigh vanish in the blink of an eye.  
Jesus visits for life—even after we die.  
Or does spiritual correctness say we return home,  
To the place He's prepared for us—to hear his shalom.

Tonight is all about Christ's home-making with us,  
A silent, holy event that made ole' Satan cuss.  
That tempter had fooled man and wife with an apple,  
Mary and Joseph in turn made the manger their chapel.

A place of new worship for sheep, shepherd and star;  
Maji offered their gifts mined in lands from afar;  
A chorus of angels sang harmony on high;  
And we gather tonight, with deep faith, to comply.

Christ is the reflection of the invisible God;  
A tiny babe mirrors love so high and so broad.  
St. Paul says in this Christ all things hold together,  
even in discord and Helene-kinds of weather.

Rising rivers and winds caused quite a Fall clatter,  
Houses and families left in jaw-dropping tatter.  
As leaves that within a wild hurricane fly,  
So did people respond to get neighbors all dry.

Up to the housetops and hollers they flew  
With sleighs full of food, water—and chainsaws too.  
We'll have years to respond and in mercy restore,  
Many families and houses from ceiling to floor.

So remember tonight families in need of a roof,  
In Spruce Pine or Palestine—and stand not aloof.  
To give some assistance as the innkeeper did,  
Is how to love a neighbor back onto the grid.

Love, of course, centers all Christian operation,  
From Christmas to Easter and Advent oration.  
Light itself speaks as we ignite candles each week,  
Hope, peace, and joy are the gifts we eagerly seek.

Hope compels as God's kingdom comes to fruition.  
Peace lives as we forgive and have true contrition.  
Joy bursts the heart via sound, spirit, and Savior.  
Love is more than a feeling; it's neighbor behavior.

Tonight's central tall candle converges all four,  
Enfleshing light in a child to guide rich and poor.  
All hearts require turning again and again,  
As we struggle with envy and anger within.

Gift-giving certainly gets hearts back in good shape.  
Thus our Christmas routine with bows, boxes and tape.  
People say it's more blessed to give than receive  
Yet both need our attention on this Christmas Eve.

Gift-giving takes planning and knowing for sure.  
Meeting a need or a hope is just the right cure.  
God planned for generations His present to us,  
His son, our Messiah, singing angels a plus.

As with all gifts received we have a choice to make:  
Will we accept with a smile, just for kindnesses sake?  
Or shall we see in the gift what God wants us to see?  
Communion, redemption, and get down on our knee?

Some receivers even dare to regift a present.  
Secretly for sure because the gift was well-meant.  
Not only will God know if you choose such a course,  
He chuckles, smiles and approves, so have no remorse.

Yes, regifting love was always part of the plan.  
It's the gift that keeps giving for woman and man.  
Remember how Scrooge deftly followed this model,  
changing lives, giving hope –  
humbly dumped without dawdle.

In the Bible, love transformed Paul, Peter, to Mary,  
who from the tomb the first good news quickly carried.  
The sad news of our day: there still Scrooges out there!  
Non-fiction sinners in God's grace to ensnare!

So receive first the Godly love gifted to you,  
let it grow mercy and faith and make soul anew  
Then regift with joy be it Tuesday or Wednesday!  
Love's needed in all hearts to cure disarray.

Each turn of the sun can be Christmas night:  
warmth, mercy and giving to set all things right.  
So receive and then give with all of your heart.  
Merry Christmas to all! In redemption take part.