

**What positive experiences did you have during Christmas time?
What challenges?**

To us a Son is given

Christmas Homily - Pope Francis

To us a son is given. We often hear it said that the greatest joy in life is the birth of a child. It is something extraordinary and it changes everything. It brings an excitement that makes us think nothing of weariness, discomfort and sleepless nights, for it fills us with a great, incomparable happiness.

That is what Christmas is: the birth of Jesus is the “newness” that enables us to be reborn each year and to find, in him, the strength needed to face every trial. Why? Because his birth is for us - for me, for you, for all of us, for everyone.

“For” is a word that appears again and again on this holy night: “For us a child is born”,

Isaiah prophesied. “For us is born this day a Saviour”, we repeated in the Psalm. Jesus “gave himself for us” (Tit 2:14), Saint Paul tells us, and in the Gospel the angel proclaims: “For to you is born this day a Saviour” (Lk 2:11). For me, for you.

Yet what do those words - for us - really mean? They mean that the Son of God, the one who is holy by nature, came to make us, as God’s children, holy by grace.

Yes, God came into the world as a child to make us children of God. What a magnificent gift!

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This day, God amazes us and says to each of us: "You are amazing". Dear sister, dear brother, never be discouraged. Are you tempted to feel you were a mistake? God tells you, "No, you are my child!"

Do you have a feeling of failure or inadequacy, the fear that you will never emerge from the dark tunnel of trial? God says to you, "Have courage, I am with you". He does this not in words, but by making himself a child with you and for you. In this way, he reminds you that the starting point of all rebirth is the recognition that we are children of God. This is the starting point for any rebirth. This is the undying heart of our hope, the incandescent core that gives

warmth and meaning to our life.

Underlying all our strengths and weaknesses, stronger than all our past hurts and failures, or our fears and concerns about the future, there is this great truth: we are beloved sons and daughters.

God's love for us does not, and never will, depend upon us. It is completely free love. Tonight cannot be explained in any other way: it is purely grace. Everything is grace. The gift is completely free, unearned by any of us, pure grace. Tonight, Saint Paul tells us, "the grace of God has appeared" (Tit 2:11). Nothing is more precious than this.