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Christmas Midnight Mass Homily

Pope Francis

Celebrating the first Christmas Midnight Mass since his election, Pope Francis said that from the moment God called Abraham, believers in the one God have been a walking, pilgrim people, and through all the wandering, God has never left his people's side. "Yet on the part of the people," the pope said in his homily for the Mass in St. Peter's Basilica, "there are times of both light and darkness, fidelity and infidelity, obedience and rebellion; times of being a pilgrim people and times of being a people adrift." In individual stories as well, "there are both bright and dark moments," he said. "If we love God and our brothers and sisters, we walk in the light; but if our heart is closed, if we are dominated by pride, deceit, self-seeking, then darkness falls

"Jesus is the light who brightens the darkness. He is mercy: Our Father always forgives us. He is our peace."

within us and around us." The glad tidings of Christmas reveal that God has broken into the world with light and salvation, he said. "Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, true man and true God," has entered human history and is sharing the human journey. "Jesus is love incarnate," Pope Francis said. "He is not simply a teacher of wisdom, he is not an ideal for which we strive while knowing that we are hopelessly distant from it. He is the meaning of life and history who has pitched his tent in our midst." The pope spoke in Italian; a Vatican translation of his homily follows, copyright © 2013 by Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

1 "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light" (Is 9:1).

This prophecy of Isaiah never ceases to touch us, especially when we hear it proclaimed in the liturgy of Christmas Night. This is not simply an emotional or sentimental matter. It moves us because it states the deep reality of what we are: a people who walk, and all around us — and within us as well — there is darkness and light.

In this night, as the spirit of darkness enfolds the world, there takes place anew the event that always amazes and surprises us: the people who walk see a great light. A light that makes us reflect on this mystery: the mystery of walking and seeing.

Walking. This verb makes us reflect on the course of history, that long journey that

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