

The Nativity of the Lord December 25, 2021

If we were to ask people what their favorite holiday is, most would probably say “Christmas”. It doesn’t matter whether they practice their faith or even believe in Jesus. Christmas captures the wonder and imagination of most people in a way that isn’t true of other holidays. And, why is that? Is it just because it is a time to gather with family and friends? Is it the lights and the festive music? Is it the sense of tradition and nostalgia for the past? We could say the same about any other holiday.

Christmas is different because it speaks to the human heart in a way that no other holiday can. Christmas speaks to our need for joy. Christmas speaks to our need for hope. Ultimately, Christmas speaks to our need for God.

All of us have a need for God, whether we recognize it or not. God is the missing piece in our heart. Nothing this world offers can substitute for God. We might be able to distract ourselves from this need but we can never escape it. We yearn for friendship with God.

That is the need that Christmas speaks to.

On Christmas Day we celebrate an historic event - God Himself became man in Jesus Christ. God steps forward to meet this need of the human heart by offering His very self in the person of Jesus. He makes Himself small so that we can pick Him up, hold Him close, and love Him.

No other religion offers us this possibility of a relationship with God as Christianity does. No other religion even claims to be able to put us in touch with our Creator. Other religions have some truths that might inspire us. But Christianity offers us Jesus Christ who is Truth itself. Other religions might offer us some insights into God that inspire us, but only Christianity can reveal God Himself to us. Only Jesus can bring God to the world because He is God translated into human flesh. Jesus Christ, the baby born on Christmas Day, is God Himself made visible for all the world to see.

The Letter to the Hebrews speaks to this truth when it says, “In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways...; in these last days, he has spoken to us through the Son.” Saint John’s gospel goes on to say that Jesus is the Word spoken by the Father. It is the Word that was spoken at the dawn of creation when God said, “Let there be light”, and it was so. The baby born in Bethlehem is that Word which brought forth creation and can now be heard by shepherds and kings alike. Whoever hears Jesus, then, hears God Himself.

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When we welcome this baby into our hearts and homes, we are welcoming God Himself. By doing so, we discover what our hearts have been yearning for. We discover that desire that had been driving us for so long, though we had no idea what it was. In this baby, our souls find refreshment, light, and peace.

Christmas Day is not just a historic event that we commemorate every year. Rather, it is a reality that renews itself daily in our world. Every day, God makes Himself small so that we can receive Him into our hearts. It happens whenever we gather for Mass. At every Mass, Jesus makes Himself present to us in a real way through the bread and wine that become His Body and Blood. We believe that Holy Communion is not just a symbol of Jesus' presence among us but that it is the reality. He is truly present. When we receive the Eucharist, we are receiving Jesus. And when we receive Jesus we receive God.

So, if God seems distant to you, if your heart yearns for Him yet you do not know where to find Him, then come to Mass. You will hear Him speak to you in the readings from the Bible. You will see Him in the faces of the other people gathered to worship. And you will receive Him in Holy Communion. Just as Jesus made Himself small so that He could be born in a stable in Bethlehem, so He makes Himself small so that He can give Himself to us in the Eucharist.

Jesus is the cure for what ails the human heart, and He makes Himself available to us so that we can be healed and transformed. Sadly, many people today choose to look elsewhere for happiness. For many reasons, people have stopped practicing the faith. Over the years, this has taken an enormous toll on our society. People are filled with hopelessness and despair. Addictions and suicides are occurring at alarming rates. Our politics are more divisive and vicious than ever. Why? Because we have been seeking joy in everything else except the true source of joy and it has left us disappointed and bitter.

But, our hope can be renewed in Jesus. He is the light that continues to shine. When we turn to Him, we discover the meaning of life and discover our value as children of God. And it really is as simple as coming to church on Sunday and receiving Him in Holy Communion.

So, if you have not been coming to Mass regularly, let this Christmas be the day that changes. If you have not been practicing your faith and have a sense that something is missing in your life, then turn to Jesus. He is what is missing. Don't let another Christmas go by without discovering the true meaning of this beautiful holiday.

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And if you already believe and have welcomed Jesus into your heart, then tell others about it. Don't keep it to yourself. If someone gave you a beautiful Christmas present, wouldn't you tell all your friends about it? Why not also tell them about the greatest gift of all - the love of God made visible in Jesus Christ.

It is this child whom we celebrate this day. It is this child who will make Himself present to us in Holy Communion. It is this child who asks us to bring His light into this dark world.