

A Christmas Meditation

The central message of the Christmas celebration is this fact: God comes to us. This can be said in two ways: God comes to us, and God comes to us. Both ways offer rich possibilities for meditation.



Consider first that God comes to us. That God, our Creator, the infinite and incomprehensible should come to us has been the subject of wishful fantasy and poetic dream. That it should be a reality is simply beyond human understanding. That is where faith comes in and where faith has often failed.

Each age has had its own point of emphasis — on the divinity of Jesus Christ or on his humanity. Our own time shows a marked predilection for consideration of the humanity of Jesus. It is entirely understandable. We live in an age of humanism which focuses attention on the human person. We talk endlessly about the development of man, his rich possibilities, his problems, his conflicts, his ideals. Which is all to the good as long as we do not fail to look beyond ourselves.

We cannot even know our possibilities or our destiny until we look at God. And we cannot do that very well at all unless God reveal himself to us. That he chose to do so by revealing himself entirely in our terms, by becoming one of us, is a mystery of love which can be perceived only by faith.

It is all right, I suppose, and a beginning of sorts, to look at Jesus Christ as a Superstar or a Superman, as the greatest man who ever lived. But it is not enough because it limits our possibilities and our destiny to what we already know or could know. It does not say that we really can't understand what we can be until we understand what it means to share "in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity." It is precisely those who believe with all their being that God humbled himself to lift us up to himself who will be able to inspire and lead men to the greatness of which they are capable. This is the hope and therefore the joy of Christmas.

God comes to us. Not to those who say "Why shouldn't he?" or "So what?" but to shepherds and children. "Unless you become like little children you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:4). Isn't that why every Christmas we gravitate toward childhood, reach out wistfully for lost inno-

cence, and wipe away a tear or two at the story of the "Littlest Angel" or the "Little Drummer Boy." We bring nothing to the cave of Bethlehem if not a childlike love, which wonders and rejoices at being first loved by such a Father and Brother. We feel at ease there in the cave because he is our "little brother" and we feel at peace because in his embrace is our salvation.

"What the world needs now is love, sweet love", but can the world even begin to understand what love means until it understands what it means for God to "consider that being divine was not something to be clung to, but emptied himself, to assume the position of a servant"? Can human beings really learn to care for others less fortunate than themselves before they understand the care of Our God for them?

A little child shall lead them, says the prophet. That child is the Child of Bethlehem. But he will only be known through the little shepherds and the little drummer boys of this generation who bring the gift of their best selves to every thing and everyone they encounter.

This is the good will, the reward of which is peace, or, if you wish, the good will toward men the result of which is peace.

Guest Columnist

Christmas . . . the Wonder of Wonders

The spirit of Christmas is so strong that it warms our hearts, and its outward signs so enchanting that it gives a lift to our thoughts and a lilt to our words.



Perhaps the earth has grown old with its burden of care for mankind, yet at Christmas, it is always young as once again it becomes the birthplace of the "Prince of Peace".

St. Bernard spent many years of his life thinking about God's love for mankind, as exemplified through the wondrous birth of Jesus, Our Savior. We will better understand why God became man if we remember that He made everyone of us in His image.

Indeed, we can help ourselves find the spirit and meaning of Christmas in the various customs and symbols which have become part of our life. The "Christmas Tree" represents the tree of life in paradise or the

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tree of the cross on which the Lord, Jesus, regained for us the supernatural life of grace.

With the display of the "Christmas Wreath", there is seen the symbol of unity, security, and strength, in the family circle, as it revolves around the Christ Child.

As we look upon the "Christmas Greens", we see the symbolic sign of eternal life. The holly with its glossy green leaves and bright red berries lends itself to the natural significance of life and growth. In the flowers, especially the poinsettia, we observe the flaming star of its bracts reminding us of the star of Bethlehem.

Throughout the years, we have linked "Bells" with the joy and spirit of Christmas, so that today, in our liturgy, we have the opportunity to ring bells, as we sing the carols to spread the message of the angels'

"Glory to God in high heaven, peace on earth to those on whom his favor rests."

The white candle known as the "Christ Candle" is a widely recognized symbol which reminds us of Him who was born to be the Light of the world. This candle is placed in the center of the family dining table and lighted during the meals as a reminder that Christ is the Guest as together the members share their food.

The "Gifts" we receive are to remind us of God's greatest gift to us. While the gifts we give enable us to show our love for God and for the members of our family, our relatives and friends.

While we consider the meaning of these various symbols as part of the traditional customs of our day, we will find the heart of Christmas, which will always remain in the life of every Christian the . . . "Wonder of Wonders", the only goal that contains in itself an eternity of happiness.

As we look forward to Christmas, we exclaim with St. John: "Come, Lord Jesus!"

Editorial

A Billion Christs? It's Up to You!

Looking at the world from a certain perspective could make one wish that Jesus Christ was going to be born this Christmas 1971.

True, Dec. 25 is arriving amidst an unpalatable stew of international conflicts — the bitter brew of Vietnam, the foul tragedy in Ireland, the acrid stench of our latest war in India and Pakistan. And in the very area that produced Christ another war simmers on the backburner.

Yes, one might think if only Christ were here now.

As we ponder the plight of the impoverished, the lonely, the physically impaired,

the ostracized, we might wish that Christ would walk among us, once again dispensing hope, love, brotherhood. That his presence would alleviate our social tribulations.

If only Christ were here this Christmas!

As we think of the false values promulgated on His birthday, the tinsel and the tin, the gaudy and phoney, the "business as usual" attitude we might wish that Christ were here to chase the money-changers out of the temple.

If only Christ were here this Christmas!

But therein lies the very miracle of Christmas. Starting from one Christ born in Bethlehem 2,000 years ago there are

now 1 billion Christs in the world.

What worldly ambition, greed, power could resist this force if it were united in thought and deed embodying the simple truths taught by the One born so long ago.

Even the Lord Jesus in his manhood couldn't perform the good deeds possible of the one billion Christians of 1971.

Wish that Christ would be here this Christmas? He will but it is up to us, each and everyone of us. And the beauty of it is that He can be here each and every day of our lifetime if we but will it.

That is the miracle of Christmas.