

Enjoy the Twelve Days! The Christmas Season

It is an exhausting race to the finish line this time of preparation for Christmas. My fear is that even we Catholics succumb to the cultural mentality that once presents are opened and the dinner is served, Christmas is over for another year. The Church, on the other hand, invites us to enjoy and celebrate the twelve days of the Christmas season. It is twelve days, 288 hours, 17,280 minutes, and a whopping 1,036,800 seconds of time to bask in the glory of which the angels sing this Christmas night!

If we were to celebrate all four liturgies this weekend which include Christmas Eve Vigil, Christmas Night, Christmas Dawn and Christmas Day, we would run through a selection of scripture that identifies Jesus as the long awaited Messiah, the one who is to reestablish our relationship with God, bridging the separation brought about by Adam and Eve. Each of these liturgies have a different gospel which tells something very different and very important about who Jesus is and why there is cause to celebrate.

Ultimately, the celebration of Christmas is about the Incarnation of Jesus, God becoming human. It is about a God who loved us so much that God poured forth God's self into our very messy human existence to help us learn what it means to be human. **"Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"** (Matthew 1: 1-25 from the gospel of Christmas Vigil) This is a celebration about the universality of the Christian message and the truth that God stands for the most marginalized of this world. **"Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were struck with great fear. The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all people.'" (Luke 2: 1-14 from the gospel for Christmas Night)**

This is the night when the things of heaven and the things of earth are reunited in a new and glorious way. **"Let us go, then, to Bethlehem to see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us."** (Luke 2: 15-20 from the gospel for Christmas Dawn). It is about the Word of God taking on the darkness (the evil) of the world. **"What came through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."**(John: 1: 1-18 – from the gospel of Christmas Day)

What appears to the rest of the culture is one day of festivities. For us who believe, the journey begins with the liturgies of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. We continue with the Feast of Mary, Mother of God on January 1st and then on to the Epiphany of the Lord. The celebrating does not end with one day but continues for the season, twelve days of joyous gratitude that Christ has come once again into our hearts. Enjoy all 1,036,800 seconds worth!!

Merry Christmas!


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