

5th Day in the Octave of Christmas December 29, 2016 St. Agnes Church

We live in a society with a short attention span. We live in a culture that wants to be entertained. The child Jesus has been born. We've attended Christmas Mass. We've exchanged gifts. We've eaten Christmas dinner. The parades are over. Most travelers have returned home. Most everyone is back to work.

It's time to move on. Set our sights on the next big national celebration. And Walmart is ready. You'll find big red candy hearts and everything Valentine's day close to the front of the store and ready to be snatched up. Who will your valentine be this year? The story of Jesus Christ coming into the world... with angels and shepherds, with wise Magi coming from the East, the story has barely been told and it's already yesterday's news.

But wait. There are many unanswered questions. Like... what does this birth mean? What does this child become? Where does this child go? What changes take place in the world because of his birth? And most important: what do we intend to do about the message of Christmas? Like most people, will we take down our "Jesus is the reason for the season" signs and posters, put them back in the basement or attic till next year? ...find another important cause to champion? ...find another underdog that needs our support?

Let me remind you...Christmas continues to be worthy of our time, continues to be worthy of our attention, our reflection and discussion. The birth of Jesus Christ, the Christmas event, is the core of our Christian, Catholic identity.

So many people today are lost in darkness. They don't know who they are. They don't know how they are connected to the people and world around them. They don't know where to look to find themselves. They are blown here and there by whim and sensationalism, never rooting their lives in truth, easily manipulated by fear, easily recruited, easily brainwashed. With no center, no foundation, choices and decisions become compulsive and impulsive. Many people have good intentions, they want to add something good to the world. But they have no way of evaluating, measuring, determining what intentions are good to begin with. Without a standard, without a fundamental objective reference point, each individual person becomes the center of their own universe.

For us, the birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God taking on human flesh, is the fundamental objective reference point for everything we do. It determines how we see and understand this world in which we live. It determines how we interpret our past, how we live in the present, and our vision for the future.

Our lives aren't self-determined. Our lives are God determined. And the birth of Christ is the ultimate revelation, the ultimate expression of God's presence, God's action, God's love for His creation, for us. This is God's remedy, God's antidote, for the problem and consequences created by the misuse of human freedom, that is, choosing evil instead of good.

At Christmas time God says: I have not forgotten you. As my creation, you are a person, you are a people, you are a world worthy of my attention. My love for you is so great that I am willing to send, not a messenger boy, not a prophet, buy my only begotten Son to speak and act on my behalf. He will save you from sin.

Our prayer for today: "O Lord, may our encounter with Jesus Your Son be the dawning of a new day, a new outpouring of Your redeeming grace that guides us along Your holy way. Stir up within my heart the desire to pay the price that comes with living in His light. Amen!"