

Living the Spirit After Christmas

I am using some thoughts from past inserts in this writing. As we celebrate the Holy Family in our liturgy on this last Saturday of December, we should be mindful of our duties to one another in that holy union of souls. Surely, we must also know that the Church binds us together as God's family. We must be mindful of one another in this time of a pandemic. Do not let anyone be lonely, if you can help bring joy and happiness.



We are less than a week away from the start of a New Year. These beginning days take place in our liturgical calendar with the close of the Christmas season. As we reflect on how that season found us this year in our spiritual journey, we may do so with mixed feelings of its actual significance as time for spiritual growth.

I speak only for myself, but I do find it hard to admit how many of the simple spiritual joys of the season seem to vanish as the years have added up. To regain some of this special joy, I know I must try to renew the simple virtues of childhood. So, I take time to examine my faith. Faith demands both belief and trust. The Latin words are *fides* (faith) and *fiducia* (trust).

I must marvel with faith at the love that the Son of God must have had to become like me in his humanity. I must trust that that same love is a continuing gift of the Father that continues even now, day by day, season after season. With great humility I have had once again to think as a child. It is not so easy to do so, to put aside all that human experience of knowledge and understanding. But it is essential, if one is to experience the happiness, spiritually of what Christmas offers.

In the love that comes to us at this season from others whom we love in return, I wonder if we see the image of that greater love that God has for us. How can we understand what it means, this Christmas story, unless we come to know it again, as we first knew it?

I think it not foolish to take time to think of all the many Christmases we have lived. Add up all the gifts of love we received. In doing this we will strengthen our power to resist that tactic that the Evil One uses so well, which is to make us believe that God could not or does not really love us. Perhaps that is why as a confessor I always liked to tell the penitent that despite all the sins and failings one has to confess in the Sacrament, God really does love him or her. Yes, with all those weaknesses of spirit, with all those human emotions of failure or inadequacy.

So, dear friends, this has been a final insert about Christmas - at least so far. It is time to write about new things. It is a New Year, 2021. We must pray that the pandemic will come to some end. It is also a time to pray about our political situation in the country. Life will be cheapened by measures to foster abortion at all times and on demand. Religious freedom can be diminished by a poor understanding of our Constitution, which itself is in peril. In the midst of all this, let us practice the virtues of hope and patience. Let not cease to live our faith with courage.

I write all this only to note that in our spiritual journey from God to God we may all have great plans, even good ones. But God has plans too. He still is God. In seeking to grow in holiness of life, we must accept the kind of holiness God has in mind for us. Of course, I do not mean that there are really different kinds, but rather that there are only different ways we come to it.

If the early Christians saw themselves as saints, seeing that they were as human as we are, then it cannot be wrong for us to see ourselves in this way. When I was a teacher at Central Catholic one of my fellow teachers used to say that we are all "beginning saints." He said this especially of the students we were teaching - hoping we would see them for what they were finally to be - great friends of God and of His Church. The few such students of mine whom I can remember, I have understood to be just that. Even the ones I may have had to send to detention, or send a possible failure notice to.

I decided to call these inserts for the bulletin by the name written above. Living - it must be a recounting of what is involved in life, a mystery that we all are trying to unravel. It must be living the Spirit. I have a great affection for the Holy Spirit. I recall how happy I was as a student to study the theology of the Third Person of the Trinity. In those days we had an Octave celebration of Pentecost, and the Mass texts were filled with marvelous ways of presenting this human attempt to know about God the Holy Spirit.

In the end it comes down to living as the temples of the Spirit. Simply put, God lives in us in some mysterious way, far more effectively than we always discern with our weak attempts. It is my hope that this New Year will be a time when we can live, really live. And that our life will be a life in and with the Spirit of God, who in the end is simply what St. John has called him, LOVE!

Let us pray.

Come, Holy Spirit, come! And from your celestial home Send a ray of light divine. Come Father of the poor! Come, source of all our store! Come, within our bosoms shine! In our labors, rest most sweet; Grateful coolness in the heat; Solace in the midst of woe. Heal our wounds, our strength renew; On our dryness pour your dew; Wash the stains of guilt away. Bend the stubborn heart and will; Melt the frozen, warm the chill; Guide the steps that go astray. On the Faithful who adore and confess Thee evermore In your sevenfold gifts descend; Give them virtue's sure reward; Give them your salvation, Lord; Give them joys that never end. Amen.

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I am wondering how you have spent the Christmas that is so unusual for us. I hope that you have not forgotten that it is above all a religious feast day. Did you think about Mary, how she fulfilled God's Will for her in giving birth to Jesus? Can you imagine the deep feelings of St. Joseph trying to provide for his beloved Mary and Jesus? Then what did they make of the appearance of three Magi? Surely, they were strange to him. Next Sunday will be the Epiphany, and we shall meditate about that mystery.

God love you always!
Monsignor Morrison