

HOMILY – CHRISTMAS 2020

There are many songs we grew up hearing that have stayed with us no matter how old we are. **“I’ll Be Home for Christmas”** reminds us of how special our families are and how much friendships enrich our lives. **“Christmas Is for Children”** takes us back to our childhood memories of Christmas and how we want our children to live in a world of wonderment and safety. **“The Little Drummer Boy”** reminds us that each of us has a gift and sharing that gift is what we are called to do as Christians.

There are many Christmas stories we remember like Scrooge and the Grinch and Rudolph and Frosty, and of course the Little Drummer Boy. We just heard in the Gospel the most beautiful and forever special story of the birth of Jesus as told by Saint Luke.

There is another story you may have heard or read before that was written by the American writer O. Henry. It was entitled the **“Gift of the Magi.”** I would like to retell, in a shortened version, this beautiful story of self-giving and love. I think it has a wonderful message for us on this day.

“A young married couple, Jim and Della, were very much in love. They were very poor and had many struggles to make ends meet. On the day before Christmas, Della was crying because she had no money with which to buy Jim a Christmas gift. She so badly wanted to give him something wonderful and special. All of a sudden she had an idea. She was told she had very beautiful hair – full and long, falling down to her waist. She thought that maybe if she cut her hair, she could earn some money by selling it to a wigmaker. She could then use the money to buy her husband a Christmas gift. That is exactly what she did. She took the money and bought a very expensive platinum chain for Jim’s most valuable possession which was a pocket watch. She was a little worried how he would react when he saw her with her hair cut very short. She combed what little hair she had and waited for Jim to come home from work.

As Jim entered the small and poorly heated apartment, he was shocked and said: “Della, your hair!”

“Don’t get angry at me, I cut it off and sold it to buy your Christmas present. It will grow back.”

“But Della, your hair!”

“What’s the matter? Don’t you love me without my hair?”

Jim said, “Of course I do.” He gave her a tender kiss. “But it does complicate the gift I bought you.” And he handed her a small box. When she opened it, she screamed with delight and then began to cry. The present that Jim bought her was a set of tortoise shell hair combs, which she could use to put up her glorious hair – the hair she no longer had.

“They are wonderful, Jim,” said Della, “and don’t worry – my hair will grow back. But look. Look what I bought you for Christmas.” And with that, she held out the platinum watch chain.

“It’s beautiful,” Jim said.

“Well, quick, Jim. Take out your watch so we can see how they go together.”

“I can’t do that,” he said, “because I sold my watch to buy the combs for your hair.”

O. Henry ends the story by saying, of all those who gave gifts that Christmas, the gift that this couple gave one another was the best. They gave one another their most valuable possession.

At this celebration of Christmas we remember how God gave his most valuable possession to us, his Son Jesus. He continues to gift us with his Son each time we receive Holy Communion. God never stops giving us his best – love, forgiveness, healing and faithfulness. What can we give to each other? There is no greater gift we can give to one another than the gift of love. And what can we give to God? Nothing greater than ourselves. Merry Christmas and God bless you.