

Leaving Security on the Shore

Christmas (Readings for the Mass During the Day)

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Christmas this year doesn't feel right. We are skipping over so many of our holiday traditions, simplifying our family gatherings, and probably not giving or receiving as many gifts. It is unfortunate that the spirit of Christmas has been taken away from us. Yet, Christmas takes place anyway. The Church celebrates the birth of our savior today anyway.

One of the things this pandemic has taught me is that we do not need things to always be the same for life to move forward. Doing things the same is our default setting because it gives us a sense of security. It gives us a sense of control, predictability, and stability. This is fine, but is our feeling of security necessary to live? Do we need the security of things always being the same? God doesn't seem to think so.

The central message of Christmas is that God give up security. On Christmas, Jesus Christ left the security of heaven and came to earth to be with us. The Word who existed from the beginning with God and was God became flesh, as the Gospel of John said. He became a vulnerable little infant at the mercy of a young mother and father who had to give birth to him in the poverty of a stable and would soon have to flee to Egypt to get away from King Herod. Jesus Christ literally gave up all his security to become human.

As imitators of God, we too, are sometimes asked to leave security behind so that we can become more human. We are asked to

give up some of our comforts and privileges in order to open ourselves up to more direct experiences of life. If we are honest, many of our problems are just First World problems anyway. To experience more of life, including the more uncomfortable parts, can make all of us more human, more empathetic, more understanding, and more loving.

In their *Aparecida Document* of 2007, the bishops of Latin America said this: “Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others.” There is a lot contained in those two sentences, most notably linking a more meaningful life with giving up security. Perhaps the reason is that whenever we are focused on our own security, we can become too self-centered and defensive. In fact, one of the things about security is that we never feel like we have enough, so we keep trying to get more and more of it. Christmas tells us that that is not the purpose of life. The purpose of life, as the Latin American bishops said, is to leave security aside so that we can communicate life to others.

Christmas is the celebration of God giving up security to come be with us in Jesus Christ.

Do I have too much security in my life? How much security can I manage to let go of?

This year of 2020, a lot has changed and a lot has been taken away from us. We might not be in the holiday spirit. Nonetheless, we still celebrate Christmas.