



A message to the faithful of the archdiocese from Archbishop Michael Jackels

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Double someone's joy or halve their sorrow this Christmas

AtNot too long ago I let a friend in on a struggle I was experiencing. I told him that I didn't need him to solve it for me; it's enough if he just listens, and shares it with me.

It's like someone once said: a joy is doubled and a sorrow is halved when we experience them with another person.

And that's what Jesus does, shares our experience.

Isaiah the prophet said that the Messiah will be called Emmanuel, which in Hebrew means God is with us.

Maybe Jesus doesn't solve all our problems, but it's enough that he shares the experience, that he is with us.

It's as if Jesus says to us: there, there; I know; I feel your pain. So, we've got that going for us, which is nice.

We may wish that Jesus would also save us from our pain. After all, in Hebrew his name means God saves.

And he does save us, at least from the futility of suffering, by not sparing himself, and by showing how our sorrows can even serve some benefit, for example:

- To toughen us up to survive and thrive through the rigors of life;
- To make us sensitive to the pain of others, and compassionate towards them;
- To put us into contact with something God wants us to change;
- To make us comfortable with mystery – there just isn't always an explanation.

Jesus saves us too from the finality of our suffering: we believe that by his suffering Jesus broke the bonds of death, and also manifested the resurrection.

Those are just some of the reasons why the birth of Jesus is happily celebrated: in him, God is with us, and God saves us from the futility and finality of our sorrows.

One way to make merry at the birth of Jesus is to pay forward the favor, that is, to double someone's joy, or to halve their sorrow by being with them, and to take away the futility and finality of their suffering – that would also make for a blessed new year.

May we all have a merry Christmas and a happy new year!

Michael Jackels, Archbishop of Dubuque

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