



Homily for the Solemnity of Christmas 2018
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Come, Adore the Christ-Child!

Merry Christmas!

Once again we have gathered here to celebrate Christ's Mass. God took our flesh as a human being, though he remained God, one in substance with the Father. As the Scriptures say, "He did not deem equality with God something to be grasped at." Jesus Christ is himself what it is to be God! That is why we come to worship and adore one who looks like any other human being.

However, we tend to forget this, especially when the secular expressions of Christmas seem to dominate with lights and advertisements, fat men in red velvet suits and all the variations upon the theme. They aren't bad, but they can obscure the true reason for our festivity. We have to be careful to guard our hearts and our true purpose, lest the consumer mentality of "secular Christmas" creeps in and becomes our sole focus. We have taken time today to refocus on the reason for the season! We are coming to worship and adore.

One of the biggest boons of the Christmas season, from a temporal point of view, is time off of work and school; a break from the regular routine. What do we do with the freedom this time affords us? We don't just take time off work to relax. Relaxation is necessary and appropriate in its due time. Man was not made for the Sabbath but rather the Sabbath was made for man. But mere relaxation cannot fulfill the definition of the Sabbath. "**Divine Rest**" is the reason, and it is rest *in* and *with* the Lord. The real reason we should take time off from the labor of this world is to adore God and to set foot into the world that is to come. Adoration means spending time before God's face. Don't be scared by the word adoration. It is not cold and boring. If adoration is cold and boring to you, you are doing it wrong! If adoration sounds like your definition of something dull you have misunderstood. Adoration of God is the end for which every human soul was made. But we have to understand it properly, lest we dismiss it as "irrelevant" to our happiness. Holy Adoration is contemplation of God's love. To contemplate means to take time with something - or in our case - someone. Adoration can be likened to gazing into the eyes of one's beloved. It is warm and life-giving. It is to revel in loving and being loved. Another seasonally appropriate image is the peace that comes from gazing into the eyes of a baby: pure and innocent, moving the heart to give everything, expecting nothing in return.

While the rest of the world starts to wind down its Christmas revelry, we Catholic Christians are just getting started. Come let us worship! Come let us adore! We come to adore the Christ-Child. And we will prolong this adoration for 12 days through the feast of the Epiphany. Now is not the time to take down the Christmas tree or the Nativity scene. Now is the time for us to adore the Christ-Child. The season of Advent has been pregnant with expectation. Christmas is the season of birth: the season for holding and cherishing the gift of life. We get to taste and see the goodness of the Lord. And that changes everything. God came in the flesh, with a face that can be seen and gazed upon. Many Protestant Christians in our society are afraid to express adoration, for fear of falling into idolatry. To worship an idol is a sin. However, what many of our separated brethren fail to understand is that veneration and adoration are part of true love of the Living God. Whereas God had previously hidden his face to the people of Israel and commanded them to make no graven images, now He has fashioned, in flesh like our own, a body and a face which reveals God to us. "He who sees me, sees the father!" Jesus says to Phillip. The Apostolic Tradition of the Church has passed down to us the portrait of Jesus in so many different iconic representations. This same



Catholic and Apostolic Church has taught us to venerate the likeness of Jesus in varied forms. “Unless you turn and become like little children you will not enter the kingdom of heaven,” says the Scriptures. Is it wrong, when a parent is away, for a child to kiss a picture of mom or dad? Even the child knows that they are not saying, “I love you,” to a piece of paper, but rather to the real person it stands for. That is why we as Catholics have the pious tradition of kissing religious objects such as an altar, a scapular or a crucifix like on Good Friday. It is not about the image or the material, but the person whom it represents. You are invited after Mass to come and venerate this image of the Christ-child laid in a manger. It is not idolatry, because God actually was placed in a manger like this scene represents.

But during the Mass, “Christ-Mass”, we have something even greater than a Nativity scene. That Nativity scene is really just the side show - the opening act - to something far greater. Upon the altar something “greater than Solomon” is present: something, rather someone, whom we adore, not in image, but in reality. At Christ-mas we do not come to adore a plastic figurine in a make-believe manger scene. We come to adore Christ Himself in the Holy Eucharist. What we call the Blessed Sacrament is the real extension of the Incarnation that took place at Jesus’ birth. God took flesh in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ gave his flesh on the cross for the life of the world. Jesus the Savior took bread and said, “Take and eat. This is my body.” We come to “adore him” as the song bids us. We “fall on our knees and hear the angels’ voices” sing in adoration. We come to commune with God-in-the-flesh. We offer the sacrifice of ourselves and adore him with our time.

Christians for centuries have desired to prolong this mystery and we have done so with the pious practice of Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. In every Catholic Church there is a Tabernacle with the Divine Presence contained within. It is noted by the lamp that is burned in vigil before it. We adore the Blessed Sacrament present, God-with-us, Emmanuel, by our genuflection, but also by spending time intentionally in His presence. There are formal ways of doing this with incense, a monstrance, and chants. We do Solemn Adoration every First Friday and our Hispanic Community continues it throughout the night. I’d like to do it more if we can, but that will take effort and commitment. However, another form of Adoration is simply being in the presence of the Tabernacle. This can happen anytime, in any Church where the Blessed Sacrament is kept. One of the great tragedies of our age is the felt need to close our churches during the week. We say we do it for security. We really do it for fear. But the Christ-child is here: God-in-the-flesh is here. And that should count for something.

I want to propose something that can only happen if this whole community is on board. I would like to start keeping the doors of the church open. I’m not sure what the details look like yet. The doors will be open at least during the day for the time being. For those worried about security, the best security is presence: *Be* the security Jesus needs. Come to Him. People coming and going into the sanctuary every day is a great witness! We are called to be a people who do not live in fear. We just renovated this new sanctuary. But we didn’t do it because we like seeing nice things one hour a week and have it closed up the rest of the time. We did it because we believe it honors the Divine Presence who dwells with us here 24/7. If you want to spend time with the Newborn King, come on down. I would like you to consider making a visit to the Blessed Sacrament outside of Mass sometime during your Christmas break. We will do our best to keep the doors open during the day. As for the rest, we will put it into the hands of our Lord and God. O, come let us adore Him, Christ our Lord.