

Dec. 27-28, 2014

Thoughts from the pastor,

The celebration of Christmas is now in full swing for the Church. Oddly enough by this weekend many people are taking their Christmas decorations down. In the time of Advent that the Church was preparing for Christmas by remembering the days or centuries that God prepared the world for the coming of His Son, many had all their Christmas activities. But maybe it is for the best for now we can celebrate the key parts of the original Christmas, without the commotion of the frenzy that the last few weeks have entailed for many of us.

Don't misinterpret me. Christmas shopping can be a wonderful thing. But like everything else it can be overdone with an attempt to create a "perfect" Christmas event. The problem is in our definition of perfection. Does it have to do with excitement and thrills or does it have to do with love of the Lord and each other? That love is not reflected in a perfect house but a welcoming home.

But the original Christmas had many aspects to it that are important to reflect on as we gear down our activities. The celebration of the birth of the Son of God and Son of Mary is the pivot point. Angels letting us know that this was no regular birth but one that truly is heavenly. The star connects heaven and earth for the same reason. The poor circumstances of Jesus being laid in a manger in a stable with livestock and being visited by shepherds reminds us that this birth is not just for royalty to acknowledge but is God's way of lifting us all up in dignity but the Word becoming Flesh. That gives flesh a whole different status.

Representatives from other nations come to let us know that this is for the whole world. We celebrate that with Epiphany. This week we will celebrate the Feast of Mary the Mother of God to help us understand that as human beings (flesh) we are involved in this plan of salvation. God wants us to be a part of it to give us dignity. It is not just a handout like a rich person who throws a dollar into a beggar's hat. This is God coming down to be with us to show us how we can attain a dignity of our own and then one beyond that, as He invites us into His family, which we celebrate with baptism. We celebrate that on the last day of the Christmas season as we remember Jesus modeling acceptance into God's family in His own baptism.

But today we celebrate that part of this plan that is modeled by four persons, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, and God the Father. Today we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Family. Without God the Father the family is incomplete because any animal family can attain that status. Jesus is that connection that brings the heavenly kingdom to be within our grasp. We celebrate that part as we come into communion with Him at Mass. Joseph is that fatherly figure that helps us see on earth what the Father in heaven is in perfection. If the love hadn't been so great Joseph might have felt like an outsider for he was a step-father but he is also husband and that is such an important part of this plan as Jesus will preach about many times and He uses the wedding image in so many of His lessons. By inviting Joseph into the Family of God in this way He invites us to join in also as the Bride of Christ.

As I mentioned Mary is the person that reminds us that God wants us to be a part of the plan of our own salvation. We celebrated that on Dec. 8th when we were reminded the plan could not be completed until she said: "May it be done to me according to your word." (Lk.1:38) This is why she is Queen of Heaven. Her yes was so critical. God would not force Himself on her. We must also say yes. May this season reinforce your "yes" to God and His plan of salvation.

God bless you all,
Fr. Frank