

Christmas Messages from our Vocationist Fathers

Merry Christmas to you and your families. Some believe the vaccine has made us free from the global pandemic of Covid-`19. Thank God we are finally free of it. All Catholics, and Christians (2.2 billion out of 8 billion) believe that Jesus came to save us, but everyone believes that “The Light shines in the darkness” (John 1:5) As Christians, we believe that “The Word is the Light (John 1:4) and The Light is Christ” (John 8:12). St. Jerome, who translated the Holy Scripture from Greek into Latin stated: “Ignorance of the Scripture is ignorance of Jesus Christ”. Throughout my five and a half years in the NEK, I was sad to admit that we as Catholics need to read more of the Holy Scripture. If we want to turn away from the bitterness of darkness to “Betterness” (brightness) of The Light, we need to taste and see how good God is in the Holy Eucharist (Psalm 34:9). Our Parish has initiated a challenge to know Jesus Christ in the Holy Scripture by reading all 73 books in the Holy Bible in 100 days, beginning January 1st, 2023. Let us debunk the myth that Catholics do not carry or read the Holy Bible. We say that the Bible is Holy, but keep it closed at home. I have asked people many times in my Sunday homilies if they know the Holy Bible; if you think you do, please look at the genealogy of Luke 3:23 -38, and Matthew 1:1-17 and find out how many names you are familiar with. Let us kiss The Word daily and open our Holy Scriptures to proclaim The Word. Let us find Jesus in the Words of the Holy Scripture. The Word can heal us, purify us, strengthen us, and set us free from the blindness of god in this age. We are truly free if the Son of God sets us free. Are we free from worldly anxieties, worries, sickness, daily troubles, and struggles? Jesus was born for us “To open the eyes of the blind, to bring out prisoners from confinement, and from the dungeon, those who live in darkness”. (Isiah 42:7) God who created you cannot save you without your help (St. Augustine).



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Someone once said that Christmas is love of God becoming flesh. May this Christmas help us to let the love of God take form in us. It is the humility and love of God the Father that helped Jesus come down to our level—to become a creature of earth. May this Christmas celebration help us to humble ourselves so we are able to understand, love and forgive each other. Merry Christmas.



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To my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ in Mater Dei Parish, I hope for each of you a truly joy-filled Christmas and an even more joyful new year. Okay; nice words, but what do they have to do with Christmas, and, for that matter, what does this year's Christmas have to do with next year's life? Everything! Christmas is about much more than exchanging gifts. Jesus Himself, the little baby in the manger, is the greatest gift ever given. We tend to call Him Jesus, but He has many other names and titles. Christmas is the birthday of Jesus, but He Himself is much more than a little baby. He is *Jesus, i.e., "God Who saves"*; the *Christ, i.e., the Anointed*"; He is the *Messiah, i.e., "the Savior (of God's people);* who is *Adonai, i.e., "the Lord"*; and *Emmanuel, i.e., "God with us"*. All these titles point not just to Bethlehem and Nazareth, but also (and much more importantly) to Calvary, to Golgotha.

The very birth of this little child points and leads inexorably to His death by crucifixion. He undergoes the scourging at the pillar out of God's infinite love for us. He suffers and dies on the cross precisely for our sins – yours and mine. He opens the gates of Paradise to us and offers us a choice: life or death, eternity in Paradise or eternity in hell. The choice is entirely ours. He never imposes His will on anyone.

The commonplace view in society today is that if we try to be generally "nice" people, then God will "let us into heaven" when the time comes. Supporters of this view like to say that "God would never send anyone to hell". This view has one major flaw: *THE BIBLE TEACHES NO SUCH THING; NOR DOES THE TRADITION OF THE CHURCH; NOR DOES THE MAGISTERIUM OF THE CHURCH.* The "everybody automatically goes to heaven" view is pure fantasy. Imagine if we all go to heaven just like we are now. However nice it started out, a "heaven" occupied for all eternity by unrepentant sinners would come to resemble hell pretty quickly.

On the other hand, it is true that God fervently **desires** that we all choose to go to Heaven. To that end, He gives us all the help we could want and more. But the rub is that we must accept and cooperate with the help He offers. **BUT HOW do we do this?**

Here is an easy way to get started. Make a pre-Lenten vow to God to do the following:

1. Attend Mass on all Sundays and Holy Days of Obligation and go to Confession when you miss one without good reason. Go to Mass even if you are conscious of mortal sin, but do not receive Communion until you go to Confession first.
2. Go to Confession at least monthly. (a) The (too) easy way: If you go but cannot recall any **actual sins**, then you are not examining your conscience **often** enough. Example: *I get angry a lot.* (b) The best way: *I get mad quite often at this person (or event or happening). I lost my temper at him/her three time since my last Confession because he/she did x, y, z.* The difference between (a) and (b) is that they both work, i.e., we receive absolution, but it is very *difficult to grow in holiness if we don't work on the root causes of our actual sins.*
3. Meditate: i.e., pray silently for some minutes per day; increase as we progress or decrease as needed.



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