

Never Alone
December 24, 2021, The Nativity of the Lord (Mass During The Night)
Gospel of Luke 2:15-20
Fr. Brad

Today we join Christians all over the world in celebration of the birth of Jesus.

There is something about Christmas that has the capacity to bring out the most generous spirit within us. Depending on our age bracket or life circumstances, we may choose to describe this time as magical, affirming, joyous, relaxing, inspiring, festive and then other adjectives come to mind as well - - like nerve racking, stressful, depressing, lonely, an exercise in perseverance. Like I said it depends on our life circumstances and our age bracket.

Now at my present age, I know now that Santa does not live at the North Pole.because of global warming he had to move his operation a few hundred kilometres to the west which happens to be at a higher elevation with more snow.

Someone once said, the experience of Christmas each year can be a time when we have an opportunity to **renegotiate our identity**. Think about that.

That makes perfect sense when you **think about what we are about as human beings following the way of Jesus**. We grow up searching for our identity through interaction with our families, friends, our culture, our ancestry, how we are formed in our faith communities, self-reflection, our life experiences, our encounters with strangers, what we learn in school, our travels, etc. Through all these factors, our self understanding and identity is always evolving. And many of these formators, though influential, fail to ultimately define who we are as individuals and most importantly, **as a child of God**.

Perhaps for even a brief moment, maybe we can see ourselves and each other the way God sees us - - **as his precious children**.

In order for us to come to that, we need to come to an awareness that we often are a little bit near-sighted when we prepare for the season...which is a season, by the way, and not a 'hello goodbye' moment, then on to the next thing. It is a season of joy at the deepest level when we ponder what His being born into the world and into our lives really means.

Our Church tradition has given us many wonderful and inspiring images to help us ponder what actually happened 2000 years ago and many of us have family traditions that keep the Christmas story alive in our world and in our hearts. We have the beautiful images of the nativity both in paintings and 3 dimensional portrayals. The crèche, the baby Jesus, Mary and Joseph looking on, the shepherds the animals, etc.

And then there is the family meal when possible and the way each of us grew up with our own family traditions. We may ask what is Christmas without these symbols and traditional practices?

But what if those external practices were removed or changed on us? Where would we be? Would our faith in a God's love for us and presence to us come into question? Or do we fear God will love us less if we don't observe Christmas in a particular prescribed way.

The Christmas message is the Gospel message and the Gospel message goes much deeper than any of external observances, no matter how long we have kept up the tradition.

Christmas is about God's driving passionate desire to dwell among us.... to be a part of the human condition.

Its that spirit which reminds us that His presence with us goes infinitely deeper than: whether we are able to attend Mass in person or livestream, whether we have a large family gathering or find our selves alone Christmas day, whether we have family and friends that we will see over the holidays (which is a wonderful thing) or spend it very much alone because all of our friends and family have died or moved away. Regardless, **He remains with us always.**

For those of us able to be here this evening, that alone is something to give thanks for. He continues to be with us in His Word and in the sacraments and in His Church. Jesus comes to each one of us again this evening in the breaking of bread and in the cup of suffering with a message of forgiveness.

Each of us has the opportunity to share Him along with His love and mercy with the world by the way we live our lives.

Perhaps over this festive season, we can ponder in a very deliberate way, how each one of us has been blessed with particular persons, be they friends, family relationships (parents siblings, cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents, etc.) or maybe a co-worker or neighbour who is a welcome presence in our lives. Some may be low on friendships and family connections at this time in their lives.

These are the times when our inner life might shine, an inner life that looks beyond the immediate and sees with the heart of Jesus.

Because he came into the world not just to teach us but to walk with us and He continues to do this through us. We have credibility with God. He has provided us with light that we may receive it and share it with those around us. God is with us.