

## **Christmas Mass... Stories**

### **Introduction...**

Here we are... we have arrived at Christmas!  
We made it. The Church is decorated,  
joyful Christmas Hymns herald the coming of Christ,  
happy hearts are ready to open Christmas gifts  
and enjoy a tasty Christmas meal with family and loved ones.

### **I Christmas Amnesia**

However, too many people this season are tempted to forget the real meaning of Christmas in the midst of busy, hectic lives.  
In our Christmas preparations we maybe forgot about God and the true meaning of Christmas as we scurried to buy our gifts,  
got stuck in Mall traffic,  
put up our Christmas lights and our Christmas trees  
and wrapped our Christmas gifts.

So many in our society seem to be suffering from *amnesia*  
when it comes to the true meaning of Christmas...  
We're not even supposed to say "Merry Christmas"...  
it's more politically correct to say "Happy Holidays."

### **II Christmas for Catholics**

We need Christmas to remind us in our *busyness* that God is present in our lives,  
that God has not forgotten about us...  
that God loves us and considers us precious in God's sight.

Christmas reminds us of God's powerful and passionate faithfulness to us  
and love for us... and God's gracious presence in our lives.  
as God sends Jesus, God's very own Son,  
to become one of us  
to lead us back to our loving Father.  
Christmas is not *predominantly* about us and our gifts...  
it's about God's love and God's gift.

### **A Christmas Story...**

*From the Desk of Donald Ware, C.P.*

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*Here's the story of a priest who caught the real meaning of Christmas...*

*During Christmas Mass one year the priest brought the young children into the Sanctuary...*

*The Sanctuary was decorated with lighted evergreen tree,  
gaily wrapped presents on a table to the side of the altar,  
and a beautiful hand painted crèche scene with several sheep, angels,  
shepherds, Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus,  
wrapped in simple warm cloth, lying in a manger filled with straw.  
Once the children were seated on the floor in the beautifully decorated  
sanctuary,  
the priest pointed to the back of the Church.  
In came a red suited, bearded Santa Clause.  
He quietly walked down the Church aisle,  
entered the Sanctuary,  
went over to the crèche scene,  
knelt before it and said a silent prayer,  
then left the Sanctuary and the Church.*

That's the meaning and the beauty of Christmas.  
Christmas is about Jesus.  
Christmas is about God's gracious presence in our midst.

There's another Christmas story that I love...  
Dr. Zeuss' story of the *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*.

Listen to this section of the story...

*The Grinch hated Christmas!  
The whole Christmas season!  
Now, please don't ask the reason.  
No one quite knows the reason.  
It could be his head wasn't screwed on just right.  
It could be, perhaps, that his shoes were too tight.  
But I think that the most likely reason of all  
May have been that his heart was two sizes too small.*

As we get older do our hearts become "two sizes too small"  
to enjoy Christmas.  
Do we lose sight of the real reason for Christmas?  
Do we get lost in Christmas preparations?  
Do we spiritually prepare for Christmas?

Christmas is about God and God's gift to us...

God's own son, Jesus.

- ❖ Our gifts are an echo of God, the gift giver.
- ❖ Our gifts show our love for others, as God's gift shows God's love for us.
- ❖ Our Christmas gathering with loved ones mirrors our Christmas gathering around the table of the Lord at our Christmas Mass, to prayerfully enjoy Christmas with each other and to receive God's Son into the manger of our hearts.
- ❖ The Christmas evergreen tree reminds us of God's faithfulness to us which lasts forever... "evergreen".
- ❖ The Christmas lights remind us of Jesus, God's light, shining brightly in the darkness of our world.
- ❖ Our Christmas hymns and carols remind us of the choir of heavenly angels singing on that first Christmas night, proclaiming the coming of Jesus.

### III Today's Gospel

Let's now turn our attention to today's Gospel.

It recounts for us our story of Christmas...

The stories we tell influence us, affect us and impact us.

Too many people get caught up in all of the Bad News stories.

This can cause us to forget about God and God's love for our world and for us.

Today's Gospel tells *our* story.

Where are you and myself in our story?

We too are at the manger, gazing at the baby Jesus.

Do we realize that we are now called to tell our story,

to bring Jesus into our world as Mary brought Jesus into her world?

Our response?

"Huh? What are you talking about? I'm *just* a student, a worker, a mother, a father, a grandmother, a grandfather... a simple person.

Let's not get too 'religious' here! Let's not go overboard.

Mary brought Christ into our world. That's her job. I could never do that!"

God says, "I'll help you... I'll grace you."

As a matter of fact, at this Mass I'll send my very Son into the manger of heart.

Be with my Son Jesus there for awhile.

Then you take my Son into your world."

This is the challenge of Christmas.

So often we forget that we are Christ-bearers, as was Mary.

Christmas helps to remind us.

### **Conclusion**

As we continue with this Eucharist let's offer ourselves together with Jesus to our loving Father.

We remember Jesus' great love for us as He shed his blood for us.

At communion time we welcome Jesus into the manger of our heart.

Then take him forth into your world.

And have a blessed and joyful Christmas celebration.