

Christmas 2020 (QA&SJ)

It's Christmastime! The atmosphere is charged with joy. Somehow to be unhappy on Christmas day seems improper. *And what is the reason for all this joy?* It's the same reason as the original joy at the first Christmas. Salvation is at hand and the heavens are opened! The messiah has come and will lead us to heaven. Jesus is for all of us: Pagan, Jew, Atheist, Muslim, Catholic, Protestant... whatever you may be in this life, he opens you to the light of his love. The angel said to the shepherds "*I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all the people; for you, is born this day in the city of David, a savior who is Christ the Lord.*" This day is the center of history, which divides into periods before and after the birth of Christ, this day calls humanity to unity. Christmas is a day of joy and hope, like every time a baby is born. Christmas commemorates a theological event much more than a historical one; the entrance of the savior into the world. No one knew the month or the day of Jesus' birth, but since in December there was a pagan celebration of the victory of the sun (Saturnalia), Christians decided to substitute it with the celebration for the feast of the True Son of love and justice, which brings warmth and life to the cold world.

In the fullness of time God sent his Son into the world. "*The word became flesh*" Born of a woman in order to be seen, heard, touched and felt. He became human to tell us that God loves us and cared for our well-being. "*God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son*" But if God so loved the world, if God so redeemed us, *why is there so much hatred, so much violence, so much injustice around us?* There is poverty, grief and war rather than peace on earth. When Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem

they were confronted right away by the reality of poverty. They could not find a place to stay and the only place available was a stable at the back of the lodging houses. A religion teacher was telling her class about the birth of baby Jesus, when she said there was no room at the inn for Mary and Joseph a boy raised his hand and said, *“Well, I blame Joseph, he should have made reservations!”* We know reservations didn’t exist in those days, but if you had money you could always find a place. Unfortunately, they didn’t have enough to pay. Some closed their doors, but others opened their hearts for them. Christmas is a feast of openness and gift giving. God gave us his Son, Mary “gave” birth to Jesus; we have to give ourselves to others. **Our Christmas gifts are but a symbol and a sign of our desire to give ourselves to others.** At Christmas we celebrate our birthday with that of Jesus. St. Leo the Great reminds us *“the birth of the Head is also the birth of the body.”* It’s our birth to new life because of Jesus who will lead us to heaven.

Every time we celebrate the birth of Christ, let this remind us of the birth of hope in a strife-torn, sin-scarred world. It’s a joyful hope that tells us never to despair. Seven hundred years before Christ’s birth Isaiah wrote in prophecy: *“the people who walk in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shown the abundant joy and great rejoicing... For a child is born.* Christmas is the perfect fulfillment of those words. Christmas this year and every year will be joyful. Christ has come into our world: *“I bring news of great joy. Do not be afraid. A savior is born for you.”* That makes all the difference in the whole world.

Hence we must never lose the Christmas spirit, for it is our faith in a savior that enables us to cope with any difficulty. Jesus may not save us from our problems in the sense of undoing a death, restoring a job loss, or mending a broken marriage, *but he will inspire us through our faith to discover fresh life, find opportunities, and not be overwhelmed by our problems.* Christ's presence is a sharing presence and we have all been recipients of God's generosity in Christ. "What return can I make to the overflowing gift you have given me Lord?" a mystic asked, "praise and thanksgiving through my generosity to share." We will never be lacking in gifts to share, no matter how poor we are. As scripture would say, 'no one is so poor as to have nothing to give.' And when it most seems that we have nothing, we can always "give Jesus" to others by our love. **Thus in greeting everyone with "Merry Christmas," we spread not only Christmas cheer, but extend Christ's hope and his loving concern. If we live this way, then the joy of Christmas will remain with us and spread through us. Merry Christmas....**