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## Aftermas

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## Aftermas

Christmas, the 25<sup>th</sup> of December, is so named from the middle ages in Europe especially, when the birthday of Jesus was known as "Christ-Mass." The big event in all the towns was the evening Mass, as there was in those days only one Church. The major decorations were not in shopping malls, but churches, and there were no bowl games or other entertainment options that might have seemed to some as more attractive than gathering to celebrate the birth of Christ at the ritual meal – the Mass – in which rich and poor shared as equals.

In our multi-cultural times, Christmas is primarily the name of a holiday on December 25 which most people celebrate as a time of sharing with family and friends, but for some of us, includes awareness of God's personal love for all people as manifested by God becoming a human. When the day's celebrations are completed, does anything remain for us?

"Aftermas" can stand for the days that follow Christmas, days that will, or certainly can, contain benefits that are largely dependent upon our chosen points of view. One size, or one perspective, does not fit all. But, like sunshine rather than darkness, some ways of viewing what we have recently experienced will enable us to see far more of what has taken place than would others.

We might wish to retain some sense of joy and kindness for the week following Christmas. We might favor ourselves and those around us by reflecting upon, and sharing with one another, the interior gifts that remain well after the wraps have come off the packages, and the parties are over. The question is not so much "What happened?" as "What do I count as blessings, when I reflect on the events leading up to, and including, Christmas?"

We have been very busy about many things for the past number of days. Rather than conclude Christmas by clearing out our minds and memories when we take out the wrapping paper and put things back in their accustomed order, we can take some time to appreciate, savor, and be thankful for many particular interactions, inspirations, thoughts, pleasant surprises, and hard-earned accomplishments that whose value to us we hardly noticed while we were in the midst of them. Like taking a finely crafted item and holding it to the light to see the details, we can now examine some of our recent experiences to see the aspects that resonate in our hearts, though we could not perceive them in the dim light of successive events as we were involved in them and while we were tired and perhaps emotionally drained.

While businesses take down every vestige of Christmas after the big sales are over, many of us deliberately retain for the week following at least some personally satisfying decorations, lights, trees, and other elements of the celebration that can help us to slow down and ponder the meaning they signify for us, and the love we have given and received in the environment supported by them. The scents of candles, greens, and special foods, the visible ornaments, tableware and decorations, candles and illuminations, and the sounds of seasonal music, all can occasion some moments of grateful reflection.

If we are too busy for Aftermas, we are probably too busy, and can do ourselves a much-needed favor by slowing down enough for the gift of Christmas to settle comfortably into our hearts.