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Christ-Mass

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Christ-Mass

We know that Christmas has been commercialized with “buy now” advertising beginning immediately after Halloween. But we still enjoy the music and the lights associated with the season, and the special efforts that most people make in their care for family, friends, and associates, and for strangers and persons in need. Parents try to let their children know about the birth of the Christ Child, and many of us take some time to reverence the mystery of God’s love for us in the person of the birthday child, Jesus.

God’s joining with the human family through human birth has been celebrated with family gatherings in homes, and in places of worship, for more than 2,000 years. People have participated in the Christ-Mass as a main event of their celebrations, in every land, language, and culture, whether or not there were gifts under the tree, or a huge meal on the table. This birthday has been and still is cause for both amazement and joy.

Whether or not we attend Christmas Mass or a religious celebration in a church, we can all find something of value by taking time to consider the birth of Christ as described in the Gospels and handed on to us in traditions and in art. The date on the calendar is an occasion for more than food and friendship; we are presented with an opportunity to meet God “on our terms” which are equally and wondrously “God’s terms.”

We are right in telling our children about “baby Jesus,” for they do not need three units of academic theology to understand that an infant is loveable, special, and must be treated with care. Helping them to associate God with familiar realities is both honest on our part and a true representation of a mystery that transcends human knowledge. As we mature, and learn about love from the perspective of giving more than receiving, we can appreciate more readily what God does in and through the birth of Jesus, born of Mary.

We cannot explain to children how an infant can also be God; we invite them to accept it. Neither can we fully comprehend what God does in choosing to meet us in the limitations of our humanity. But, with an attitude of acceptance, we can learn more about ourselves, and God, every time we reflect on the events that are celebrated on the day of the Christ-Mass.

At one time, we notice that God, in Jesus, chooses to be needy, dependant, and inconvenienced; Joseph and Mary were without a home, family, or minimal access to healthcare at the time of Jesus' birth. In another moment we notice that the living God, who saves us from the dark possibilities of which we are capable, does so through weakness, not power. God, a human, has to be cared for and educated, rather than coming among us as one with control over every situation. We can see with fresh understanding that God's decided preference is not coercion, but attraction: a living expression of the moral high ground that is rejected by those who seek power over others.

With new-born children, we have hopes for their future – good health, security, a prosperous life. As we look at the Christ child, we know what lies ahead: acceptance by some, rejection by many, with torture and death as a criminal as the concluding events of a rather short life. God's wisdom in choosing this means of saving us is not "worldly-wise," but is perfectly effective. The power of Rome was complete when Jesus was born; God can and does work through and around all such empires, but they do not in themselves manifest God's direct and personal means for eliciting the trust that enables us to fulfill the purpose of our existence. Jesus comes from God, and is the most effective means to "bring us back to God."

A blessed Christmas to all, through our trust in the Child who is God.