

The True Meaning of Christmas

A couple of years ago my twin went down to the Bay Park Square Mall in Green Bay and interviewed people about the true meaning of Christmas. Most people said things like family, togetherness, gifts, and joy. Some were so stressed they didn't want to deal with the question. The correct answer is: **Christmas celebrates the Birthday of Jesus Christ.** He was born on December 25th. Usually when someone has a birthday we throw a party and we get them a gift. What if you invited lots of guests to your birthday party, but when they arrived, they gave gifts to each other, but none of the guests had thought to get you a gift. Wouldn't that be strange? That is how we celebrate Christmas every year.

What does your family do to make *Christ* the center of Christmas?

Keeping Christ in Christmas isn't something that just happens. We have to choose to do it. Here are some thoughts on how to do it this year:

- **Come and Worship.** Church is going to be crowded especially at the Vigil Mass. Please be patient. Many of the people who come to Church are getting their "obligation" in before rushing home to open gifts. A lot of people will be unfamiliar with the new Mass responses. Be friendly and warm and help them feel at home. Don't just attend Mass; come to celebrate! At Mass we not only remember Jesus, we also get to receive Him ourselves in a similar way to how Mary received the Christ child into her womb. Take time at the end of Mass to pray and reflect on the great mystery we have received. Enjoy the decorations, the music, and the people, and most of all, God-with-us.
- **Come to Reconciliation.** If you were receiving any guest into your home, wouldn't you take the time to clean your home? Through Communion we receive the Lord of the Universe into our bodies and into our hearts. Is your heart prepared for so noble a visitor? We are offering a parish reconciliation service **Wednesday night, December 21st at 6:30 PM at Holy Trinity.** It is an excellent way to get rid of some of the holiday baggage and prepare to really celebrate.
- **The Christmas Crèche.** The nativity scene was invented by St. Francis of Assisi. He was so impressed by the poverty of Jesus born in a stable that he wanted everyone to see it. It is still a good way to remember the true meaning of Christmas. Gather around the crèche and read the story of the birth of Jesus. Then sing "Happy Birthday" to our King.
- **Keep celebrating.** Christmas is just getting started on December 25th. For two more weeks we will continue celebrating. The whole week is the "Octave of Christmas" ending on January 1, the feast of Mary the Mother of God. Sunday, January 8th is the feast of Epiphany (when Baby Jesus finally got his presents). The last feast of Christmas, the Baptism of the Lord, is Monday January 9th.
- **Share your own ideas.** What is something special you do? Share it with me and others.

Now we still need to answer the question: **What are you giving Jesus for his birthday?**

Fr. Joel