



CHRISTMAS – JESUS, REALLY AMONG US

The festivities of Christmas are upon us. For all sorts of reasons this significant Christian feast has found expression in celebration in the community long before the day of the birth of our Lord. Christmas parties, Christmas pageants, Christmas lights, Christmas cribs, Christmas presents – all are indicative that something monumental is being honoured and remembered in our midst. However, the danger is that these early manifestations of Christmas - the tinsel, the baubles and all that accompanies them - may take precedence over the true meaning of Christmas. That is to say; “Unto us a saviour has been born; He is Christ the Lord.” We would do well to remember that this simple message is our constant joy and the true cause of all our celebrations.

Preoccupied as we are at Christmas by the distractions we invent, in an effort to express our joy and highlight the moment, we can so readily miss the point. God has come among us in the person of His Son, Jesus the Christ, and yet too often we are blinded to the presence of the very person whose coming we revere.

Only in the context of prayer can we give full value to the importance of the infancy narratives as found in the Gospels. At once then, we are grateful and hopeful, in His holy presence. God is among us, and our hearts are glad.



Not so long ago a Religious Sister went to a Catholic School to greet a class of ten year olds and speak to them about her trip to the Holy Land. She showed some pictures and slides of all the historically important places she had visited: Bethlehem, Nazareth, Bethany, Jerusalem and a host of others places referred to in Scripture.

What is worrisome about her story, as she later related it, are the questions asked by one child in the class: “Was Jesus a person? Was He for real?” This ignorance sounds appalling to many of us but in fact a recent survey has stated that 40 percent of adults in England believe that Jesus was not a real person! Sadly, we live in pagan times.

In our passing on of the faith we need to be clear, to those who will listen, that Jesus is not some Super hero of comic book fame. No, He is indeed real. He is not a figment of someone’s imagination. We know from the works of historians in ancient times that the existence of Jesus is beyond question. However, other questions, even for true believers, await an answer: Is Jesus so real to me that I see in Him the model of how I should live? Do I believe in the depths of my heart that He is my Lord and Saviour? Am I prepared to follow Him as His disciple and live my life as He has called on me to do?

In our prayerful reflections during this feast of Christmas the story of Jesus’ birth should instil in us not only an immense joy but also a sense of gratitude to God whose love for us knows no bounds. As we hear the words of the Gospel proclaiming the wonder of the birth of our Lord, then like Mary, we should treasure these words and ponder them in our hearts.

*The Angel said to them,
Do not be afraid; for see –
I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people:
To you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,
Who is the Messiah, The Lord. Luke 2:10-11*

I wish you and your family God's choicest blessings this Christmas, in this extraordinary time of Grace.

Christopher Saunders