

Christmas Homily- 2017

Family members and friends, Merry Christmas! Welcome to this Christmas celebration. How does Christmas change your world? Think about a moment. How does this Christmas change your world? How will your world be different from now on because of Christmas? Will you be happier? Will you have more peace in your life? Will you be a better person? If we are completely honest, Christmas doesn't really change our world all that much. Christmas doesn't change our lives that much. Largely, we celebrate Christmas as a great American holiday. **The purpose of Christmas, the birth of Christ, was to bring a change to our world.** I don't mean just "the world" in general, but I mean he came to bring a change to each and every one of our personal worlds

When Pope Julius I sanctioned December 25 to be celebrated as the birthday of Jesus in A.D. 353, who would have ever thought that it would become what it is today. In 1223 when St. Francis of Assisi used a nearby cave and set up a manger filled with straw and his friend Vellita brought in an ox and a donkey, just like at Bethlehem nobody thought how that novel idea was going to evolve through centuries. When Professor Charles Follen lit candles on the first Christmas tree in America in 1832, who would have ever thought that the decorations would become as elaborate as they are today? It is a long time since 1832, longer from 1223 and 353, longer still from that dark night brightened by a special star in which Jesus the king was born. In the midst of all these wonderful excitement and elaborate decorations and expensive commercialization and fascinating celebrations, our challenge is to keep Christ in the Christmas and share the spirit of Christmas and understand the real meaning of Christmas. And what the real meaning of Christmas and who is this person whose birth we celebrate today?

A lady came home and saw three old men sitting in her front yard. She did not recognize them but invited them to enter her house to have something to eat. They asked, "Is the man of the house, home?" She said, "No, he is out!" "Then we cannot come in," they replied. When her husband returned, she told him what had happened, and he told her to invite them in. When she invited them, they replied, "We cannot go into the house together." One of the old man explained: "His name is Wealth," he said, pointing to one of his friends, and pointing to the other one, "He is Success." "I am Love." "Now go in and discuss with your husband which one of us you want in your home."

The couple had a discussion. The husband wanted to invite Wealth, in order to fill their home with wealth. The wife on the other hand wanted to invite Success. Their daughter heard the commotion, and came to join the discussion. She said that it would be better to invite Love so that their home will be filled with love. Finally the couple agreed to follow the daughter's advice. The wife went out to invite Love as their guest. Love started walking into the house. The other two men also got up and followed him. Surprised, the lady asked Wealth and Success, "I invited Love. Why are you two coming in?" The old men replied together, "If you had invited Wealth or Success, the other two of us would have stayed out, but since you invited Love, wherever he goes, we go with him. Wherever there is Love, there is also Wealth and Success!"

Luke 2: 10-11 "The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord". If the birth of Jesus is a matter of great joy, then, why we don't experience that joy and peace in our lives and the lives of many people? The answer is very simple: we are looking for joy and peace in wrong things and wrong people.

History tells us that there has been no shortage of false liberators and pseudo-saviors, who have deceived generations of people all around the world. The Greek philosophers believed that education and knowledge would liberate the world. Later, rationalists like Voltaire and Rousseau taught that mere human reason, alone, provided a solution for all human problems. Revolutionary movements, such as Communism, have offered mankind the dream of an worldly paradise. Today, many people advocate science and technology as the solution for all human problems, while some others turn to alcohol, drugs or other pleasures to escape their troubles. Our century has witnessed the uncontrolled use of sex as a false liberating instrument, and Eastern mystical experiences and modern psychological techniques as ways to peace of mind and heart. Despite the claims of these various solutions, however, the true remedy for our troubles, as every Christmas reminds us, is Jesus, our divine Savior Who, alone, can give us both true liberation and lasting peace and joy.

Let us remember the famous lines of Alexander Pope: "What do I profit if Jesus is born in thousands of cribs all over the world during this Christmas, but is not born in my heart. For hundreds of years, the coming of the Messiah had been prophesied. "They name Him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast and forever peaceful" (Is 9:5-6). However, when the Messiah finally was born, "The inhabitants of Jerusalem and their rulers failed to recognize Him, and in condemning Him they fulfilled the words of the prophets which we read sabbath after sabbath" (Acts 13:27). "He was in the world, and through Him the world was made, yet the world did not know Who He was. To His own He came, yet His own did not accept Him" (Jn 1:10-11). Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger because there was already no room for Him in the hearts of many (Lk 2:7). Jesus, the Messiah, the Savior of humanity continues

to be easily rejected. He is so easily rejected. We substitute Messiah with something else.

Why Christmas doesn't change our life? For many people it's just an information. , if it is just information it is not going to make that much of a difference in our lives. For example, there are a lot of people out there who will say that drinking coffee is not good for you. But I still drink coffee. I hear the information but it doesn't affect me that much. The information that God entered time and space, "and the word became flesh and dwelt among us" is good, but if it is only information, it doesn't make much of a difference.

Jesus is the solution for our pursuit and search. Where there is Jesus there is success and wealth peace and Joy. The name, Jesus, is the Greek form of the Hebrew *Yehosua*, which means 'YHWH is salvation.' Just as the first Joshua (successor of Moses) saved the Israelites from their enemies, the second Joshua (Jesus) will save them from their sins. Our challenge is becoming the selected few, becoming one among the shepherds who notice Jesus — or one among the wise men who worship Him? Will you be like Mary and Joseph and let the Lord totally disrupt your life — all for the Baby Jesus? Will you put Christ ahead of Christmas? Reject anything in Christmas not pleasing to Christ. Accept Him as Lord and Savior of Christmas. In the life of the believer, Christmas is an everyday celebration...celebrate **Christmas Everyday!**