

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." John 1:1,4-5

Merry Christmas! So much to be thankful for during this time: food and fun and presents and the presence of loved ones. Christmas is truly the "Most Wonderful Time of the Year!" I pray thus far it has been truly blessed for you.

Don't halt the celebrations early! The 25th has passed, but we have the 12 days of Christmas season and 40 days (to February 2nd) to dwell upon the Christmas mysteries ahead. Don't allow yourself to become miserly with the Christmas spirit. Even Old Ebenezer Scrooge declared at the end of his journey in Dickens' A Christmas Carol, "I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year!" What a blessed sentiment! But what does it mean?

The great Protestant Scripture Scholar NT Wright explains Christmas this way, "Christmas is not a reminder that the world is really quite a nice old place. It reminds us that the world is a shockingly bad old place, where wickedness flourishes unchecked, where children are murdered, where civilized countries make a lot of money by selling weapons to uncivilized ones so they can blow each other apart. Christmas is God lighting a candle, and you don't light a candle in a room that's already full of sunlight. You light a candle in a room that's so murky that the candle, when lit, reveals just how bad things really are. The light shines in the darkness, says St. John, and the darkness has not overcome it."

Isn't that something... Christmas is something that shows us how disturbingly bad the state of this old, tired world of ours truly is. Christmas exposes the reality that the world needs a Savior. Christmas reminds us that the world is full of so many hurts and hardships. The angels proclaim tidings of great joy that shall be for all people because today is born for all people in the city of the great King salvation incarnate, the anointed Messiah, the Master of all creation (cf. Lk 2:10ff).

The Heavenly Hosts then proclaim, "Glory to God in the Highest, and peace to men of good will." But why is it not peace to all men? In short, not all men will the good. Many men will against the good; they will to destroy goodness; and millennia of practice have perfected their craft.

John 1:10ff continues, "*He was in the world... but the world did not know him. He came to his own, but his own people did not accept him.*" In fact, they rejected, cursed, beat, and bloodied the Lord of Glory because his truth disturbed their dark lies and power structures. The only ones who had peace were those who accepted His light.

Jesus's birth disturbed the peace of the powerful. In Christ's birth, God was lighting a candle amidst the darkness and woundedness of the world. The presence of the Lord reminds us that we are wounded people. That is why so many of us fear to approach Jesus. We see in the midst of that innocence and perfection that our imperfections, our bad habits, our losses and griefs will be exposed and ultimately be lifted if we draw too close. We've grown comfortable with our disorders. The God-Infant's bright beauty shows us just how bad we and the situations around us really are.

Don't be afraid to approach the Christ Child lying in the manger. He does not come in power to crush you. He does not come in kingly estate to rule or enslave you. He does not even come as a surgeon with scalpel in hand to cut you or as nurse with syringe in tote to pierce you through. The Holy Infant comes to you as a babe to be held by you. He comes as a child to be cherished by you. He comes as brightness of the Father's Glory to illuminate your path ahead that leads to fullness of peace. All you must do is draw near, approach laying down your fear and guard.

As Catholics, we have the tradition of coming up throughout Christmastide to kiss a blessed image of the Divine Christmas Child. We give a touch, a kiss, a bow which we wish we could give to Jesus' tender flesh as we drop a gift of value to him in the basket beside.

We all have the fear that approaching Jesus costs us something of ourselves. It does. And it always will. But the cost is only our self-reliance, fears, and insufficiencies with which we sadly identify. But if we drop them into the basket before his presence, realizing that a man wrapped up in himself makes for a very small package, we can see how a man wrapped and swaddled in Divinity and lying in the meanness of a manger makes the greatest of all possible presents. For only in this presence is our greatest potential truly revealed. Only in this light do we experience beauty and liberation from darkness within and without.

The true meaning of Christmas is that the darkness and error of sin is exposed; that the insuperable light of truth incarnate reveals things as terrible as they are, and how great and marvelous they can be. Christmas is God lighting a candle toward a brighter tomorrow with Him among us.

From whatever state you find yourself in today, if you approach the Christ Child as we have proposed, you, like Scrooge, will be truly able to honor Christmas in your heart, and keep it all the year! O Christ, lead kindly light – through 2022 and beyond. God love you friends+