

## **Christmas 2016**

**Christmas is unlike any other day! It is charged with rich traditions, warm emotions, and touching sentiments. No other day has captured the imagination of artists, writers, poets, and musicians. There are more paintings, nativity scenes, poems, songs about Christmas than any other day. Although there are some non-religious Christmas themes, the main focus has remained the same for over two millennia. Christmas celebrates the birth of God's son as a human being. Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Savior.**

**No other person's birthday, however prominent or influential, is celebrated by so many in so many ways. No other person has had such an influence on human civilization and culture as has Jesus Christ. A little girl got it right when she wrote to Santa: "do you know Jesus is the real reason for Christmas? I don't want to hurt your feelings, but it's true."**

**This is why we are here today and it is a good thing. It is good for the very young, for the adolescent, for young adults, for the single and married, for parents, and for older folks. For Jesus was born for all.**

**There are many stories that have been inspired by Christmas. Notable among them are Charles Dickens' famous novella, *A Christmas Carol*, written in 1843, and the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*, celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year.**

**The most moving story, however, is told by that dear and glorious physician, Saint Luke the Evangelist. He gives us a very simple yet very beautiful account of Jesus' birth and its meaning. It is good to read and reflect on it prayerfully. Visually, it is spiritually beneficial to gaze with wonder at our Church nativity scene or one at home.**

**Luke tells us that Jesus was born in very humble circumstances. Mary and Joseph had travelled to his ancestral town of Bethlehem to comply with the census ordered by the Roman emperor. Because of the crowded town, there was no room for them in the inns. And so Jesus was born outdoors, in a stable, and laid in a manger, a feeding trough for farm animals.**

**This is quite prophetic as Jesus, in his public ministry, would feed the multitudes and proclaim that he is the bread of life. It is indeed prophetic that Bethlehem, which means house of bread, is the birthplace of Jesus, the bread of life.**

**As Catholics, we believe that Jesus continues to be born within us, when we receive him, under the outward appearance of bread in the Holy Eucharist, the Mass. This is why the birth of Jesus is called Christmas or Christ's Mass. In 19<sup>th</sup> England, a Member of Parliament named Thomas Massey, proposed to change the name Christmas to Christ Tide to disassociate it from the Catholic Mass. Daniel O'Connell, the champion of Irish independence and also a Member of Parliament, rose to object. To be consistent, O'Connell argued, then Thomas Massey's name should be changed to To-tide Tidey! Needless to say, Massey's proposal was dismissed.**

**Every Mass, every celebration of the Holy Eucharist, marks the coming, the birth of Jesus on our altar, for our spiritual nourishment. This is why Mass is celebrated every day, hence, in a sense, every day is Christmas. This is why it is so important for Catholics to come to Mass every Sunday, every Lord's Day.**

**What Jesus did and taught after his birth is most important. In fact, his deeds and teachings are even more important. He was born to save all from eternal death and to save all for a loving union with God in eternal life. He gave his life in sacrifice that all might live. The wood stable of Bethlehem would give way to the wood of the cross on which Jesus would die and rise from. Jesus taught us to respect, love, and care for one another, especially the most vulnerable of all, the poor, homeless, children, the sick and diseased, the pre-born, the outcast etc.**

**Let us enjoy this wonderful feast of Christmas in many wholesome ways. More importantly may remember the Christ of Christmas and re-dedicate ourselves to be his devoted disciples day by day, every day!**