

Chaplain's Bulletin December 24, 2023



Dear Folks,

Merry Christmas!

After Matthew 1&2, Luke 1&2, and John 1:14, my favorite Christmas story is Dicken's "A Christmas Carol." In this story, we find this tidbit: "Scrooge's nephew Fred said, 'There are many things from which I might have derived good, by which I have not profited, I dare say, Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come around—apart from the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anything belonging to it can be apart from that—as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of people below them as if they really were fellow passengers to the grave, and not some other race of creatures bound on other journeys. And therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or silver in my pocket, I believe it has done me good, and will do me good; and I say God bless it!'"

Christmas, and all of Christianity, for that matter, is about God getting us to open our hearts so that He can save us from the selfish prison of our sin to receive His love, give our love, and accept His gift of salvation.

The day will come when God gathers His people together for the heavenly banquet, the final gathering. All divisions will cease, all needs will be provided for, all wounds will be healed, and all truth revealed. All the hurts that we have received from others will be healed. They will know how they hurt us, and we will be at peace. All those we have hurt will be healed, and they will know how sorry we are, how much we were trying, and how much penance we have done. We will all be at peace. Our inner emptiness will be filled. We will see the glory of God, beyond anything we could fit in ourselves now. Our joy will overflow forever.

This all comes from a little baby; born in the last place you would expect - in a little town in the Middle East. Imagine Mary and Joseph holding that tiny body, looking into His eyes, knowing He was destined for greatness but probably not realizing the immensity of the plan, that He was and is the greatest gift of all, for all time. He would heal the sick, feed the hungry, reconcile sinners, and proclaim the truth. His gift of Self would make it possible for us to be gathered to

that great final gathering.

In the meantime, we are to encounter Him and share Him. We share Him in many ways, including being a bit more kind, forgiving, charitable, and pleasant. We can seek to be compassionate to the hurting (so many, many people are hurting!), reconcile with others, help the needy, and witness to the truth of God's goodness. Whenever we have a chance to give a sliver of His love and goodness to someone, He is present. The success of our Christmas does not depend on how much we enjoy it (though I hope you have much joy this Christmas, but how much we are directed, and how much we help direct others, to that final gathering.

Blessings and Joy,

Fr. Jim