

## **Giving, the Perfect Christmas Gift!**

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At this time of year, many people put a lot of pressure on themselves, trying to find “the Perfect Christmas gift”. And while I hate to sound like a wet-blanket-of-snow, anyone tonight who’s still looking for that perfect gift, may be a bit late! I don’t mean late in terms of finding a store with extended hours [though good luck with that]. I’m talking about the fact that giving “the Perfect Christmas gift” is something that takes considerable time and concerted effort.

Those magi from the East don’t just magically appear at the Christ Child’s doorstep to drop-off their gifts. According to the story, they travel many miles - perhaps many months - over treacherous terrain, in order to arrive at their destination. The gifts they present aren’t some tacky trinkets they pick-up at a local Bethlehem boutique. They are precious possessions which they have lovingly carried with them from the heart of their homeland. And in order to keep the Holy Family safe, those magi must make a daring detour around the demented and jealous King Herod, as they head for home. There’s definitely nothing cheap, or easy, about the giving of those earliest “Christmas Gifts”! And yet, that priceless treasure of

gold, frankincense, and myrrh isn't the crowning prize of that First Noel!

The Greatest Gift of Christmas actually takes about nine months to prepare. And long before that precious gift of life begins to grow in Mary's womb, the Holy Source of Life has been patiently preparing the world for a Living Word of compassion, unity, and peace. Our Faith proclaims that what the *written* words of Holy Scripture couldn't fully convey, is brought to life through the *Incarnation* - the Word made flesh which dwells among us. And in the person of Jesus Christ, God's Perfect Gift is fully embodied, showing us the authentic quality and nature of Divine love and grace. Tonight, you and I - along with Christians around the world - gather to contemplate and celebrate that Divine Gift. We do so by reading Scripture, singing carols, lighting candles, and raising our praise and our prayers to the Holy One. However, we don't just gather to remember Christ's birth; we are here to re-claim and re-incarnate Christ's message and mission for our world today.

Just as that Divine Gift of Holy Love is embodied and brought to life in the person of Jesus, that same precious Gift *continues* to take-on life in and through our own acts of kindness, compassion, and gracious welcome. And in a world which often seems over-run with fear and greed, hatred, prejudice and violence, the Christmas Gift of "Peace on earth, goodwill to all" is critically important! In many ways, the world into which

Jesus is born is similar to ours. The rich and powerful often did as they please; while the poor and vulnerable are pushed aside and discounted. Jesus' response to the world's pain and brokenness isn't to compound it; but rather to infuse it with Divine compassion and power - to personally touch and transform people's hurting lives, so that they might be restored and redeemed.

Jesus' undying trust in Divine love and goodness gives him the confidence to take-on the powerful forces of fear and hatred, suffering and death - even though he knows that by doing so, he himself will be attacked. The Good News which Jesus Christ reveals, is that regardless of the evil that touches our lives, the Divine Spirit of Life is always with us; and there is nothing that can ever separate us from God's Perfect Gift of Love!

Divine Love is the Perfect Christmas Gift - the Gift that keeps on giving! The gift which you and I can freely share - not only tonight, but every day of the year! Christmas reminds us that Divine Word and Action always go hand-in-hand. It also reminds us that you and I really can't share the Gift of Divine Love, until it takes-hold of our own lives and is born anew within us. So tonight, as you and I celebrate the Perfect Gift of this Holy Season, may we also feel that Holy Presence among us and within us:

As we share together the sacred gift of Bread and Cup;

As we watch the light of our little candles fill this room  
with their glorious glow;  
As we look around at the faces of *this* Holy Family on  
this Holy Night; knowing that once again, Jesus Christ  
is born among us!