

The Greatest Gift Ever!

By Bishop Victor Galeone

But all that changed with the coming of Christ. As the Angel Gabriel predicted to Mary before his birth, "He will rule over the House of Jacob forever, and his reign will never end." (Luke 1:33)

Yes, all official documents - birth certificates, passports, negotiable checks, etc. - unwittingly must acknowledge the reign of Christ as King: March 3, 2009. 2009 what? Two thousand and nine years since the birth of a crucified Galilean Jew!

But Jesus is much more than that. His impact on the history of the world is unexplainable if it were not for what all true Christians believe: Existing from all eternity as God's one and only Son, he took on our mortal flesh 2000 years ago in Mary's womb.

The Lord Jesus has no desire to reign on the pages of a calendar, as much as to reign in the hearts of every single person for whom he died.

It's customary to give the ones we love a special gift for their birthday. To help us all give Jesus the only gift he truly wants from us, I'd like to conclude my message with this moving reflection that I came across some 20 years ago:

Bring Your Presence to the Tree

It inspires creativity and personal sacrifice with our pocketbooks and time. At Christmas we think of children with their expectations and parents with their budgets that never seem to match them.

Still, somewhere beyond the wrappings, trimmings, presents, and fun is the real meaning of Christmas. And that meaning doesn't lie in what will be given or received this year, but rather in what was given long ago and has never been received by many. The meaning of Christmas is found within the word itself - Christ.

What father would not like to give the world to his son? Yet the Heavenly Father gave his Son to the world.

"But that wasn't on the list of things we wanted."

God decided on the very first Christmas to give what we needed, not what we expected. He decided to give us a gift that would keep on giving - that gift was a person.

It was the most precious gift the Creator of the universe could give without ceasing to be himself. This was sacrificial giving; and that's exactly what Jesus Christ was - a sacrifice. He came and lived; but his purpose in coming was to die - to die in our place.

There's a tree we don't pay too much attention to at Christmas. There are no bright lights on it and no ornaments to make it pretty. But the greatest Christmas gift of all, Jesus himself, was placed on that tree - the cross of Calvary.

Not what we expected is it? But Christ's death is what we need. His gift to us is forgiveness for our past and a promise for our future.

As with any gift, Jesus must be received. Two thousand years ago he was born in a stable - that marks the turning point of history. Today, he can be "born" in your heart, marking your personal turning point.

God has given his very best - the costliest gift ever. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

This Christmas bring your presence to the tree - the cross where Jesus died for you. Give your life to the One who gave you his.

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