One of my earliest Christmas remembrances is of my mother trying to find something for each of us children to receive on Christmas. Like it was yesterday, I remember my mother sitting in the hall chair by the phone with the Sears & Roebucks catalog in her lap and the six of us clamoring around her making our requests known in the most urgent of terms. I can only imagine how hard it was for her trying to make our Christmas wishes a reality on what was a very limited budget.

At that time, my father was a traveling salesman and was gone much of the time. This left most of our Christmas preparations to mother along with all the normal responsibilities of a mother. In the midst of all this, my mother was able to pass on the real meaning of Christmas to us, the birth of the Christ Child. At the time we children
only vaguely understood the fullness of the meaning of the Virgin birth, but it was our mother who planted this seed of faith. More concretely, my mother passed on the faith by how she lived her life. Since then, time, grace, and deeper reflection on this mystery have grown this belief into the full gravity of what is meant by incarnation, the birth of the child we celebrate each year.

Incarnation is the meaning of the season. In God's infinite wisdom, God chose to create all that is, and in God's complete humility, God chose to enter creation and become one of us. In this choice by God, and with the cooperation of Mary, the union of divinity with humanity was accomplished in Jesus Christ; Son of God – son of man. "For the Son of God became man so that we might become God." (St. Athanasius) "The only-begotten Son of God, wanting to make us sharers in his divinity, assumed our nature, so that he, made man, might make men gods." (St. Thomas Aquinas – See Catechism of the Catholic Church #460) What this means for us now and forever is nothing less than Heaven.

I say "now and forever," because the union of flesh and spirit that was begun in Bethlehem 2000 years ago continued in the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and continues today in each one of us. The union of flesh and spirit culminates in Heaven for us, but it begins in the birth of our faith here on earth. "We who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death. We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection." (Romans 6:3-6)

Our belief in the "bodily" resurrection of Jesus underlies our basic premise of body and spirit being joined in Christ. This union of flesh and spirit, which begins with the birth of Jesus, culminates in his resurrection. What is true for Jesus is true for us, that we will also be raised on the last day. Otherwise, if there is no resurrection of Jesus there will be no resurrection for us. This is quite traditional and orthodox here. Resurrection does not only mean an eternal reward in the future. "For behold, the kingdom of God is now." (Luke 17:21) This means living the prayer Jesus taught his disciples, "Thy kingdom come thy will be done." Choosing to live a life where "all the way to Heaven is heaven and that way is the way of Christ." (Catherine of Siena)

Resurrection is the Incarnation taken to its full and logical conclusion. What we choose now, we will indeed be for all eternity. It is our own decision to make; do we accept the gravity of how we choose to live? Do we believe that the birth of Jesus ushered in a new way of life for the world? Are we ready to live fully in the spirit of Christmas, as the union of body and spirit? It is our choice and we make it in total freedom. We can choose to keep Christ in Christmas, but that means living fully the incarnation of body and spirit. To live this way is to give our children a gift that will never disappoint, and that they will never outgrow. This is an idea that may be too much for us now, but if we are willing the Holy Spirit can make up for whatever is lacking.