

December 2022 Pastoral Thought

As I write this pastoral thought for the month of December, the corona virus is still in the news. We have vaccines and booster shots. However a number of new stressors and challenges face us this year. Inflation has raised the prices of gas, food, and gifts on our Christmas shopping list. The crisis at our southern border continues with millions of illegal crossings and fentanyl killing hundreds a day. Politicians are still impacting our country and lives after the midterm elections.

I've heard people anxious and stressed as they might not be able to get the Christmas presents they want for family and loved ones. Our celebration of Christmas usually centers around Christmas Mass, gift giving, spending time with family and friends, and wishing everyone peace and joy. Although not as bad as last year, some say it's going to be a bleak and more costly Christmas this year. But as much of our holiday traditions and family customs are being limited, perhaps there is a silver lining to this dark cloud. Our holiday traditions and family customs can add to the anxieties and complexities as Christmas approaches. Maybe we shouldn't be thinking about what might be missing from the holidays this year but rather focus on what we do have and what is possible this year.

The birth of Christ on the first Christmas Day was not as complicated, elaborate and sophisticated as it has become today. In a humble stable on a cold winter's night, Mary gave birth to Our Lord and laid him in a manger. At that moment we could say that the Holy Family was homeless. But it was not the surroundings that was important. The center of this moment in salvation history is that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. This gift promised by God and foretold by the Old Testament prophets was proclaimed by the angels, shepherds, and wisemen. Their proclamation would eventually spread glad tidings to the whole world.

We have everything that God promised and was present at the first Christmas present with us today. God is our loving Father who gave us the gift of His Only Begotten Son. Despite the limiting circumstances this year, this gift is given to us in the Eucharist on Christmas Day. Born in a stable then now reborn in our hearts. We celebrate this gift and love of God symbolically in the love, gifts, peace and joy that we share on Christmas Day 2022. Let us be positive as we celebrate this Christmas Season. Let our prayer be "Loving Father, we thank you for the gift of your Son. Help us to see the daily blessings that surround us on Christmas Day and into the New Year."

Fr. Phil Llanos