

December 26, 2020

Welcome to Christmastide!

Good Morning Gobin Family!

I am thrilled to have the opportunity to use this medium in speaking with you regarding one of my favorite elements of our Christian Tradition...Christmastide!

I plan to send you a short daily reflection through Christmastide. While our first day might be a bit longer for the sake of context, my prayer is that each reflection will include an invitation to contemplation as well as practice and action. My desire is for this to be an invitation that we can live into. As Wesley explained, faith is only living if it is producing the fruit of a Love filled life.

As we discussed in our Advent Journey, early Christians knew we couldn't just glibly walk into the Christmas feast; no, we need to ready our hearts and prepare ourselves to embrace the depths of incarnation. For this reason they gave us the season of Advent.

This is a season of waiting yes, but so much more than waiting! Advent is the way we align our mind, body, and soul to what is happening in and through creation around us. It welcomes us to embrace the truth found around AND within us that the deepest dark is NOT the place where grace goes to die, but rather it is the place where grace is reborn.

In the same way we do not rush into Christmas without Advent, let us not rush out of Christmas until it has its work in us.

We would like to invite you to take time to enjoy the fullness of the Feast of Christmas, often called Christmastide. According to the Church Fathers and Mothers, we need 13 days (Christmas day plus the 12 day Feast) to celebrate the beauty of this Feast. Perhaps because it took at least twelve days, and then some, for the self-disclosure of God to settle into our consciousness. We encourage you to consider leaving some of the Christmas decorations up or doing something that reminds you that Christmas isn't over. These days are about the wonder, the power, and the lessons of birth. God in and with humanity. Let the whole cosmos rejoice!

The Divine Infinity was placed in a trough where animals eat. The idea is revolutionary... and forever will be! We MUST slow down to consider that the reign of God has come, AND is coming, first to the lowly. What the Incarnation means is that God has hidden Godself in the place of emptiness, brokenness, oppression, and struggle...where WE are!

On this second day of Christmastide we encourage you to remember that Love is found in Given-ness. The way this works is that Love will always be self emptying, before it is infilling. There HAS to be pouring out before there can be filling up. God, Love itself, is pouring Godself out to you constantly. This is ALL Love can do! There is nothing you can do to start or stop this flood of Infinite Love. It is impossible for you to increase or diminish the flow. Rather, Love is rushing to you and like the beautiful metaphor of water, when poured out it always finds the lowest point first!

On the Church calendar this 2nd Day of Christmas is called the Feast of St. Stephen, the first martyr of the Church. St. Stephen's feast day was honored by collecting food, clothing, and money for the poor, widowed, or ill. Thus it became known as Boxing Day- as people boxed items to take to those in need.

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This model of giving, particularly in the face of deadly persecution is an incredible example of the great Christmas reset. God is with us! There is no time for revenge. We are invited to put aside any notion of retribution and embrace Love in action found in the simple self-giving demonstrations of forgiveness.

Let's remember St. Stephen's final prayer. He follows the model of Jesus by forgiving, "Then Stephen knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died." Amen.

Grace and Peace,
Joel Everson