

Impact

Bring faith to life. Find life in faith.

In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"
Lk 2: 8-14

What Christmas is all about

"Lights, please." We can picture the scene in our mind's eye: Linus moves to the center of the stage and recites the story from memory, ending simply with "That's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown." The passage Linus recounts in "A Charlie Brown Christmas" is from the Gospel of Luke. We hear it each year at Christmas Mass during the night (often, later evening or midnight Mass).

What is Christmas all about?

Christmas is about God's love for us.

Jesus comes to be one with us, embracing humanity as we are. The incarnation shows us that we do not have to hide our thoughts, feelings, questions, and struggles. God is with us in all times and seasons of our lives.

Christmas is about God's mercy. Jesus' very name means "God saves." In Christ, we know that no sin is beyond forgiveness, no action is beyond redemption.

Christmas is about God's compassion.

The birth of Jesus as a baby in Bethlehem shows us the depths of Christ's oneness with the poor and vulnerable. "Bethlehem" means "house of bread." From the very moment of Jesus' birth, we are shown that he is the Bread of Life, for all.

Christmas helps us to take to heart the truth that God's love is real.

When we see and experience love, we know God. When our hearts long for peace, kindness and goodwill among people, look to Christ, whose light shines in darkness.

Christmas calls us to be for others.

As people who know God's saving love, how can we not share this love with those who need it? When we care for family, share our time in service, our attention and prayer with the lonely or ill, our

resources with the poor, we are sharing the real meaning of Christmas, no matter the time of year.

Christmas is more than a day or a season. Christmas is about a way of life. Knowing the depths of God's love for us in this Christmas time, we stretch ourselves to live as Christ's people, every day.



What is Christmas all about for you?

We each have something special to give

Can you imagine the story of the nativity of our Lord without the angels and shepherds, or the magi, or Mary or Joseph? Each had something to give: their presence; their prayers of praise and glory to God; gold, frankincense and myrrh, their yes to God's plan even when they did not fully comprehend what was being asked of them. And we find hope in Christ's love as a result.

The things we do may seem insignificant to us, but the shepherds may have felt the same as they hurried to see the baby in the manger. Yet something is missing without our presence and action, our sharing of our time, talents and resources, our being people of loving care and service to others. The Christmas story would not be the same without the shepherds and angels, magi and saints, and our experience of the Christmas story would not be the same without St. Francis' gift of the nativity scene. Like them, we too have something special to give.



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A new year to live and grow in faith

Most of us will make a New Year's resolution as we begin 2017. Statistics show that most of us will not live out our resolution beyond the first few weeks of the year. We have to ask ourselves if we were if we were reasonable in what we promised to do, or if we were really all that committed to the resolution to start with!

Perhaps this year, our goal should be realistic, have lasting impact on our

“I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day.” (Pope Francis, The Joy of the Gospel, 3)

lives, and the lives of those with whom we interact. Maybe this is the year we should focus on living and growing in faith. Faith is a gift from God, offered to each of us. Faith, too, requires an openness to the One who knows and loves us more than we know ourselves.

Perhaps our resolution this year might be just this simple: let us promise to be open to Jesus. This is a resolution worth keeping!

Impact this month

1. Be like Mary. Say yes to God's invitation to bear Christ through your actions. Be attentive to and ponder God's love, shown in the sacraments and in the actions of others.
2. Be like Joseph. Trust in God, even when you are uncertain. Be open to surprises. Have faith that God is with you, and always wants what is best for you and for all of humanity.
3. Be like Jesus. Be humble and seek God's will. Give yourself for the sake of others. Know that you have a purpose that is deeply connected to God's hopes for the world.