

## HOMILY ~ FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT DECEMBER 21/22, 2024

I called a friend this week on his cell phone and when he answered, I could tell by the background noise that he was not at home. “*Where are you?*” “*At the mall,*” he said. “*Oh, you’re probably doing your Christmas shopping.*” “*No,*” he said, “*I’m here looking—looking for Christmas.*” This threw me and so I asked him, “*What do you mean, you’re looking for Christmas?*” My friend explained: “*You see when I was a child, Christmas just happened. The anticipation, the excitement, the mystery were all immediate. All through December, the feelings, the rush, the thrill kept building until Christmas morning. It was magic. But now that I am an adult and my own children are grown, it’s different. Today I realized that it’s only a few days from Christmas and as yet I have felt nothing; no anticipating, no excitement, no wonder. So, I took off a few hours and I came here to the mall just to look and to try to see if I could find something to ignite that excitement. I hate to admit it, but this Christmas I’m out looking for Christmas.*”

It is only a few days until Christmas. **How is it for you?** Are you finding yourself excited, involved, engaged in the wonder of these upcoming days; or are you going through the routine. If you find that you lack the magic of the season, do you think it makes sense to go out and look for Christmas? That is an important question and the answer to it depends on what you think you are looking for. Because in one sense, looking for Christmas is foolish, but in another it is not only wise, but necessary.

If what you are looking for is your childhood, those simple days when Christmas happened like a force of nature, then looking is a waste of time. We cannot live our lives backwards. We cannot become children again. We are adults, with adult responsibility and experiences. Our lives are complex and busy. We cannot experience Christmas with the simplicity of a child in which the thrill of the holiday overrides everything else.

Yet—even though it is useless to go out looking for our childhood, the child within us can still help us look for Christmas. I say this because the one thing that is certain about children at Christmas is that **they believe. They believe** that the gifts will arrive. **They believe** that their family will be together. **They believe** that Christmas morning will be wonderful. It is that childlike faith that we can imitate even as adults.

What then is our faith? **What do we as adults believe?** Let me remind you. **We believe that** God has made us and given us the Son as our Savior. **We believe** that God loves us and is always working to bring life out of death and light out of darkness. **We believe** that God is a present force in our life and that whatever we have to face, whatever we have to deal with, God is always seeking to bless us and to give us joy. With that faith we can celebrate Christmas even if we are dealing with sickness or grief or problems in our family. Because even in those circumstances **we believe** that God is still looking for an opportunity to touch us and to give us peace. In faith, even though our lives are complex and busy, **we believe** that it only takes a moment for God to seize us and give us joy.

That moment might come in a chance conversation with a stranger in the mall. It might happen in a glance of gratitude that someone gives us because of our generosity. It can surprise us in sudden laughter that interrupts a long illness or struggle. It can emerge in an intimate touch from a faithful spouse. ***Like Mary and Elizabeth in today's Gospel, that moment can be as simple as a meeting of old friends who recount what has happened in their lives and how God has blessed them.***

For children, Christmas is a month-long crescendo building to a dramatic climax on Christmas morning. But, for most of us adults, our lives are too complex to sustain that kind of celebration. Fortunately all adults need is a moment, a moment in which the truth breaks through, a moment in which we remember again that God is real, that we are loved, that life is good. Such a moment could happen today, or Christmas morning, or two weeks from now. But whenever it happens, whenever God's love breaks through, it is then that Christmas will arrive.

Now we all enjoy the traditions of the season. It would be beautiful if all the shopping and baking and planning and customs would pull together in a harmonious build up to a dramatic climax this Wednesday morning. But adults know that Christmas is deeper than all those things; deeper than Santa, deeper than gifts, deeper than Christmas morning. Christmas is whenever the love of God breaks through and touches our lives.

So, if you have not yet caught the Christmas spirit, if you are not yet filled with holiday excitement, do not be afraid to go out and look for Christmas. Now you know what you're looking for.

Peace,  
Deacon Don