

December 23, 2018

From Fr. Jim . . .



Gift Giving at Christmas Time: The best present that we have ever received is the presence of God's coming to us in human form and shape in the birth of God's son, Jesus Christ. Arguably, the best gift that we can give to another at Christmas is the gift of our presence. In her book, Out of the Ordinary 2000, Sr. Joyce Rupp suggests that we consider the "Present of Presence." This primarily involves "being with" someone rather than just "doing" for someone. There are two possible ways to be with another – physically be present with another and be present to another "in spirit" by deliberately sending prayer, compassionate thoughts, and kind feelings toward another person or group. She suggests giving the "Present of Presence" by: being with someone who needs you; being with a person who gives you hope; being with those who live in terror or fear; being with an older person; being with someone who has helped you to grow; being with one who is in pain; being with yourself; being with someone who has written to you; spending time with a child; being with someone who is terminally ill; being with a coworker; being with your loved ones. These are only some. She suggests more. What "Present of Presence" would you add to this list? We can be about "being with" in addition to just "doing for" because of God choosing to share our human form and dwell in us. We have the ability to warm the lives of others with our very presence because of this incredible Gift of Love.

On this note, I want to thank everyone who wants to create this presence through the spiritual and corporal works of mercy and through expressions of solidarity with those who are most in need. You are not just providing for their physical and material needs but in ways that you are not fully aware, you are building a spiritual relationship with them. You are treating them as a brother or sister in Christ. You are giving them the present of Christ's presence and love. People know that they are not alone or have not been forgotten or that there are others who really care about them. They know that God is born to them and remains with them. Thank you so very much!

Welcome, Welcome and again Welcome! As the angels sang, "Glory to God in the highest and peace on earth to all," they announced the coming of God to everyone. All of heaven and earth is joined together now as God has taken on our flesh. No one is excluded from God's salvation, no one. In this spirit, we invite you and whomever you wish to invite, to be with us to celebrate the great feast of Christmas. This is a good time to invite someone who may feel alienated from the church to come with you. Extend an invitation and welcome them. If you see it as appropriate, help others find the songs in the hymnals and the responses to the liturgy and missalettes. For the celebration of this great feast, full active participation by everyone is our greatest response to the coming of the Lord. Also, welcoming others and extending the hospitality of the Eucharist is a great response. This is one of our best virtues at St. Leo. Thanks be to God. Let's give this as our Christmas gift to others in honor of the One who has made a home with us and among us.

Mass on Christmas Day, Tuesday, Dec. 25 is 10:30am. On behalf of our entire staff, I wish all of you a very Merry Christmas and the blessing and gift of Christ's presence and peace for a joyous New Year. May the Lord be present to you in new, exciting and profound ways. May you experience God's love and mercy like you never have before. God is truly with us! All Glory and praise be to God.

Best Wishes for a Blessed and Merry Christmas, and may the peace and the joy and the love of that wonderful night be with you always.