



1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2020

COVID-19 CAN'T STOP CHRISTMAS

By *Miriam Esteban Benito*
www.aleteia.org

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When we remember the true Christmas spirit, we can appreciate this day with its full meaning.

What will Christmas be like this year? Will the pandemic make it a very different holiday? Around this time every year, shop windows and streets are festooned with an abundance of holiday decorations, and stores are overflowing with gifts and toys.

If 2020 were a normal year, we'd be organizing our Christmas activities by now. What decorations should we buy for the house? Who's in charge of Secret Santa? What day will the office Christmas party be held?

This year, there will be some new questions (and some of the old ones won't apply): How many guests is a safe number? Will we even be able to share a meal with our family? Will there be a government-decreed shelter-in-place order?

This year, because of COVID-19, we'll have to avoid large public events such as parades, festivals, and Christmas parties at the office. The word from health experts is that it's unlikely the situation will improve enough for us to celebrate Christmas without restrictions. Going by current trends, some experts even suggest that by Christmas we may need to enter a new period of lockdown.

Reinventing Christmas?

Given the situation, I ask myself: Do we really have to reinvent Christmas?

In the days before Christmas 2018, Pope Francis asked how God would want us to celebrate this holiday. This year, in the face of the pandemic, this question takes on even more meaning. Now, more than ever, we need to reflect on what kind of Christmas we want to live. At the time, in December 2018, Pope Francis said, "To celebrate Christmas, then, is to receive on earth the surprises of Heaven ... It is the celebration of an unprecedented God who overturns our logic and our expectations."

The arrival of God radically changed Mary's plans, and this year a virus has totally changed ours. The first of these events was the best thing ever to happen to humanity, while the latter feels like the opposite, but we can look to the Holy Family's example in celebrating this unusual Christmas.

More than two thousand years ago, when Jesus was born, the general situation was no better. The family of Nazareth also encountered many "restrictions." In obedience to a decree issued by Caesar Augustus, Joseph and Mary (who had few economic resources) traveled to Bethlehem. There, Mary "gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7).

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FEASTS FOR DECEMBER

The feasts on the General Roman Calendar celebrated during the month of December are:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 3 Francis Xavier, Memorial | 25 Christmas, Solemnity |
| 6 Second Sunday of Advent, Sunday | 26 Stephen, Feast |
| 7 Ambrose, Memorial | 27 Holy Family, Feast |
| 8 Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary,
Patronal Feast day of the United States of America,
Solemnity | 28 Holy Innocents, Feast |
| 9 Juan Diego (USA), Opt. Mem. | 29 Thomas Becket, Opt. Mem. |
| 11 Damasus I, Opt. Mem. | 31 Sylvester I, Opt. Mem. |
| 12 Our Lady of Guadalupe (USA), Feast | |
| 13 Third Sunday of Advent, Sunday | |
| 14 John of the Cross, Memorial | |
| 20 Fourth Sunday of Advent, Sunday | |
| 21 Peter Canisius, Opt. Mem. | |
| 23 John of Kanty, Opt. Mem. | |

The feasts of St. Nicholas (December 6), St. Lucy (December 13) and St. John the Evangelist (December 27) are superseded by the Sunday liturgy. ☐

THANK YOU

... a small and simple phrase that comes from a grateful heart!

Psalm 106:2

MARY'S CHRISTMAS DREAM

The following excerpted article is printed inside each of the Christmas cards sold by The Divine Mercy Publication

I HAD A DREAM, JOSEPH, ABOUT A BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION FOR OUR SON. THE PEOPLE HAD BEEN PREPARING FOR IT FOR ABOUT SIX WEEKS, DECORATED THE HOUSE AND BOUGHT NEW CLOTHES. THEY'D GONE SHOPPING MANY TIMES AND BOUGHT ELABORATE GIFTS. IT WAS PECULIAR THOUGH, BECAUSE THE PRESENTS WERE NOT FOR OUR SON. THEY WRAPPED THEM IN BEAUTIFUL PAPER AND TIED THEM WITH LOVELY BOWS, AND STACKED THEM UNDER A DECORATED TREE. THE BRANCHES WERE FULL OF GLOWING BALLS AND SPARKLING ORNAMENTS. THERE WAS A FIGURE ON THE TOP OF THE TREE. IT LOOKED LIKE AN ANGEL. OH, IT WAS SO BEAUTIFUL. EVERYONE WAS LAUGHING, VERY HAPPY, AND ALL EXCITED ABOUT THE GIFTS. THEY GAVE THE GIFTS TO EACH OTHER, JOSEPH, NOT TO OUR SON. I DON'T THINK THEY EVEN KNEW HIM. THEY NEVER MENTIONED HIS NAME. DOESN'T IT SEEM ODD FOR PEOPLE TO GO TO ALL THAT TROUBLE TO CELEBRATE SOMEONE'S BIRTHDAY IF THEY DON'T KNOW HIM? I HAD THE STRANGEST FEELING THAT IF OUR SON HAD GONE TO THIS CELEBRATION, HE WOULD HAVE BEEN INTRUDING. IT MADE ME WANT TO CRY. HOW SAD FOR JESUS NOT TO BE WANTED AT HIS OWN BIRTHDAY PARTY. I'M GLAD IT WAS ONLY A DREAM. HOW TERRIBLE JOSEPH, IF IT HAD BEEN REAL!

**"LET'S PUT CHRIST BACK INTO CHRISTMAS" -
FOR THEN THERE WILL BE PEACE ON EARTH FOR ALL MEN.**

**THANK YOU, INFANT JESUS,
FOR BEING BORN TO SAVE MANKIND.**

GOD TOUCHED ME

*Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.
Tell everyone about the amazing things he does. — 1 Chronicles 16:24*

HAVE YOU FORGIVEN YOURSELF?

By Katherine Keller

"... for His name's sake your sins were forgiven"

1 John 2:12

We were flying to a conference. I was in the middle seat – certainly not my choice – but my husband and I have an agreement that if a woman is sitting by the window, I sit in the middle, if a man is in the seat by the window, Marvin sits in the middle.

Barely was I settled, when I discerned that the young woman sitting next to me was very sad and deep in thought. Making conversation, I asked her where she was from, where she was going and what she did.

She was a student and had been attending university in Poland – the homeland of her father. Then she told me sadly that her father had died. She had chosen to attend college in Poland against her father's wishes and their relationship had been strained. They hadn't forgiven each other when he died.

She seemed so sad and I recognized a deeper issue. I asked her if she had forgiven herself for not complying with her father's wishes. She answered that she couldn't forgive herself and felt so guilty. Slowly, I began to tell her about God's love and forgiveness. Because of Christ's death on the cross, her sins were forgiven, and

guilt was removed. I encouraged her to trust that because God had forgiven her, she could forgive herself no matter how awful she thought she had been. As I spoke, I prayed, and my husband prayed.

I told her about something I had done as a teenager for which I had felt guilty about for many years. How I had come to the place where I was faced with the choice of forgiving myself because Christ had already forgiven me, or I could continue feeling guilty the rest of my life. I had chosen to forgive myself.

The light in her eyes went on. She began to understand she was totally forgiven and could forgive herself. She could be free and happy. "God meant for you to sit with me today," she told me at the end of the flight. □

Katherine Keller served as the producer and executive editor of Women Today Magazine, which was read in over 140 countries. In 1995, she began a website version of the magazine. In only a few years, the website grew to five websites, in English and French. When she transferred her ministry responsibilities to other women, over 220,000 women from 155 countries visited these websites every month. More than 11,000 women subscribe to her devotionals.

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

To all Devotees and Friends:

As we welcome our dear Lord on this Advent's liturgical celebration, let us all contemplate on the mercy and love of GOD THE FATHER for His creation - the triumph in fulfilling His promise of human redemption through His son, JESUS.

May this reconciliation of Sinners and The Holy One bring about the blessing,



grace, joy and faith to our hearts this Christmas season! With this present condition at a global scale, the more we need our LORD to strengthen our FAITH not in exchange of FEAR and

disobedience which the enemy sowed in the hearts of our first parents in Eden. Remember BETHLEHEM, the place where God chose to sow FAITH and HOPE, in exchange of fear and death.

On behalf of The Spiritual Army of God the Father Ministry, a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you and your loved ones!

Sincerely in God's Love,

Brother Vic

Upcoming Events

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

1ST FRIDAY DEVOTION FOR THE HOLY SOULS IN PURGATORY

DECEMBER 4, 2020

IN LOS ANGELES VIA ZOOM

IN LAS VEGAS VIRTUAL

1ST SATURDAY DEVOTION

DECEMBER 5, 2020

IN LOS ANGELES VIA ZOOM

IN LAS VEGAS VIRTUAL

1ST SUNDAY DEVOTION

DECEMBER 6, 2020

IN LOS ANGELES VIA ZOOM

IN LAS VEGAS VIRTUAL

800 OUR FATHER DEVOTION

DECEMBER 19, 2020

IN LOS ANGELES VIA ZOOM

IN LAS VEGAS VIRTUAL

COVID-19 CAN'T STOP CHRISTMAS

Days later, warned in a dream of the threat presented by Herod's intention to murder the child, Joseph didn't hesitate to set out with his family to emigrate to Egypt.

Christmas spirit

Christmas is always an opportunity that God puts before us to celebrate in a special way a promise that gives us hope. Pope Francis also said in December 2018,

"Christmas inaugurates a new epoch where life is not planned, but is given: where one no longer lives for oneself, on the basis of one's own taste, but rather for God."

In December 2011, then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio referred to a cartoon in which a girl told a friend what she had asked from her parents for Christmas: "She had asked her parents not to give her toys but to give her 'Christmas spirit.' Her parents were surprised, not understanding or knowing what to do."

In the light of that cartoon, the now-pope asked an important question: What is the Christmas spirit? His answer: It's the promise of hope that culminates in Jesus.

Let's start by doing acts of generosity, both big and small, for others. These acts are a very important element, so that during this upcoming Advent season, hope may be the gift that shines the most. We are all called to give the world the hope we have received from Christ himself.

CHRISTMAS

Let's be thankful for our many blessings, and share that attitude with others. This Christmas, let's write and call those we love and those whom we know could use some extra company. Let's show our family how lucky we are

to be in touch at Christmas in spite of the distance. It is important to know how to value what we have. Let's look at the flip side of the restrictions of COVID-19 and think that, through them, the Lord is making "all things new" (Revelation 21:5).

Ideas for living a COVID Christmas

Let's set up the Nativity scene as a family, and take the opportunity to contemplate the story of St. Joseph, the Virgin Mary and the Child Jesus. This will help us become aware of the great gift we have received through our faith.



The manger of Bethlehem manifests the tenderness of God who has become a child to show us how close He is to every human being, in spite of the circumstances. In the stable of Bethlehem there's room for each and every one of us. Shepherds, doctors, blacksmiths, nurses, car mechanics, office workers ... people of all professions reflect the holiness of everyday life, our daily problems, and how Jesus shares with us His

life, which can make even the most severe confinement extraordinary.

We don't have to reinvent Christmas! We can really live a full Christmas, "without restrictions," if we understand its true meaning. All we need is to know how to welcome the hopeful spirit of Christmas and spread it to everyone, as the shepherds of Bethlehem did. Our faces should shine with this spirit, in spite of difficulties or setbacks.

Will COVID-19 take Christmas away from us? Without a doubt, it will not. Let's get rid of fear! Let's make this our best Christmas ever.

Let us "open wide the doors to Christ" (St. John Paul II, October 22, 1978). □