



# CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

980 PARK AVENUE AT 84TH STREET • NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10028 • (212) 288-3588

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Christmas 2006

## The Heart of Reality Revealed

In the small, rural Pennsylvania town of my boyhood, our Pastor's moral authority was virtually unquestioned. By virtue of his position, but also because of his imposing character and keen intelligence, Father Matt's word was law and wisdom. His word during the weeks leading up to Christmas was always the same: "Keep Christ in Christmas."

It is not difficult to see the rationale and urgency of his message, not then, not now. Yet, as the years pass, I am less and less comfortable with the formulation of his message. I think to myself: Christ cannot be kept out of Christmas. There is nothing that we mean by "Christmas" without Christ. Christ is at the core, however hidden He is from our view, however obscured He is by superficiality and sentimentality. Christ makes Christmas possible, not just in the plain sense that the story of His birth gives rise to this holiday, but also in the sense that Christ still persistently "does" Christmas for us and in us. In our celebration of Christmas Christ continues His mission of proclaiming and actualizing the Reign of God.

The Divine Word, who did not find our flesh repugnant, who freely chose fully to share our human condition, is in no wise reluctant to do His saving work through means many people would label as "secular," or merely "humanistic" means. The message of the Incarnation is precisely that the Word has made His home among us, that, with the

eyes of faith, we can now encounter the Eternal, the Faithful One at work in what otherwise we might be inclined to overlook or undervalue. In the words of the Jesuit poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, "The world is charged with the grandeur of God."

Do we have to put Christ back into families, who, despite distance, sometimes geographical, sometimes affective, find themselves in this season making great efforts to share a meal, to speak to one another, to reconnect? Christ is surely already there, discreetly awakening our commitment and strengthening our ability to treasure, to forgive, to embrace those closest to us. Could Christ possibly be far from our desire to be in touch through e-mails, cards, letters, calls, social events with people who are significant to us? It is always Christ who is calling us beyond our own frontiers, who is urging us to find the joy that only a life of love can afford.

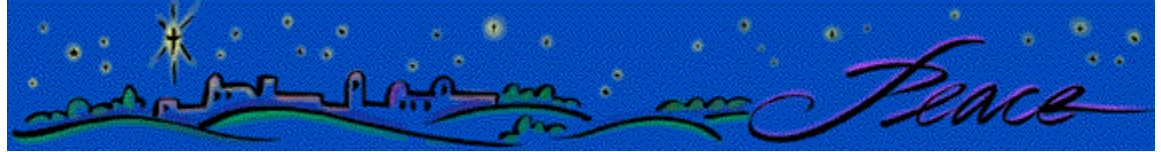


**"The message of the Incarnation is precisely that the Word has made His home among us.."**

Is Christ not involved whenever eyes are opened to the needs of those suffering poverty, sickness, loneliness? Is it not Christ's Spirit acting through us, whenever we reach out in service, when we share our time, resources, affection with those whom we are inclined to forget? The "Christmas Spirit" is luring us, whether we know it or not, ever closer to the inclusive community of compassion and solidarity that Jesus came in the flesh to inaugurate.

Is Christ absent from those moments when we gaze at the Christmas tree, the crèche, the lights, when our hearts are stirred by a wonder, arrested by a joy for which we have no suitable words? When the melodies and lyrics of the carols ring in our ears and echo in our memories, do we not find ourselves believing, perhaps against our better judgment, that what this Child represents might yet be possible, for me, for my family, for our world?

Let us gratefully recognize the One who comes to us, who moves our hearts, who teases our imaginations, who dares us to friendship and



**“CHRISTMAS.....opens the path for us toward what we are called to be and to become..”**

genuine community. He is the image of the Eternal One, Emmanuel, God-with-Us. To name him so is to acknowledge that what we are experiencing these days is no fantasy, no seasonal flight from reality, but rather, a window into the heart of reality.

To identify the affective movements we experience, the hopes that surface, the desires that draw us, and to say: these are of God, is to accept that Christmas is not limited to these few days, but that it opens the path for us toward what we are called to be and to become. The peace that comes from trusting in the God who comes among us in Jesus, the joy that results from striving for reconciliation, the exhilaration that flows from authentic intimacy and community, these are a true revelation and foretaste.

They also represent a call to allow this same “Christmas Spirit” to continue to shape us as individuals and as a Parish. We are still learning what Christ wishes to make of us, as we allow Christmas to do its work in us. It is sure to rock us, confuse us, re-orient us, as we seek ways to carry Christmas into Ordinary Time. As we open our hearts to this familiar but ever odd story of God’s own Son come among us in winter’s night, in smallness and poverty, the story will begin to inhabit us, giving birth, little by little, to a new community, conformed to this story.

**Fr. Gerald R. Blaszczak, S.J.**  
Pastor



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**If you are making a gift of stock**, please provide the Church Treasurer, Mr. Fernando Castro, with the name and number of shares to be transferred by calling (212) 606-3476 or emailing [castrof@saintignatiusloyola.org](mailto:castrof@saintignatiusloyola.org).

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