

WITH CHRISTMAS APPROACHING...



Christmas is closing in on us and I've already witnessed the stress it can bring many I have encountered. Any of you been to the malls lately? What has come to be known as "road rage" has manifested itself at this time of the year as "parking-lot rage," "last-popular-item-on-the-shelf rage," and "how-dare-they-say-my-Visa-is-maxed-out rage!" It's wild out there, folks!" Where's that old Christmas spirit?

However both my spiritual moorings and seasonal sentiment are positive. But I know others are not so fortunate. This 'recession' has cost lots of people both their jobs and homes and has made them dread Christmas. What could be worse than being unable to give something to the people you love at this season? Unless it is a young mother who has just learned of a malignancy. Or a family having its first Christmas without some key member who transitioned 'died' last year.

So maybe not everyone's "joy quotient" is quite as high as mine at the mere-days-and-counting mark to Christmas. And just how are things with you?

Henry Nouwen wrote in his journal about a "dry" Christmas he once experienced. In his touching *The Road to Daybreak*, he writes:

It just seemed that I wasn't part of it. At times I even caught myself looking at it all like an unbeliever who wonders what everybody is so busy and excited about . . .

Still, in the midst of it all I saw — even though I did not feel — that this day may prove to be full of grace after all. Somehow I realized that songs, music, good feelings, beautiful liturgies, nice presents, big dinners and many sweet words do not make Christmas. Christmas is saying "yes" to something beyond all emotions and feelings. Christmas is saying "yes" to a hope based on God's initiative, which has nothing to do with what I think or feel. Christmas is believing that the salvation of the world is God's work and not mine. Things will never look just right or feel just right. If they did, someone would be lying. The world is not whole and today I experienced this fact in my own unhappiness. But it is into this broken world that a child is born who is called Son of the Most High, Prince of Peace, Savior.

I look at him and pray, "Thank you, Lord, that you came, independent of my feelings and thoughts. Your heart is greater than mine." Maybe a "dry" Christmas, a Christmas without much to feel or think, will bring me closer to the true mystery of God-with-us. What it asks is pure, naked faith.

Even if everything isn't "just right" for you as Christmas approaches, trust God and know that this holy season affirms something larger than sentiment. It says that God is with you in every situation to supply the grace you need.

And although, biblically, Christmas isn't mandated or required of God's people. It's just an opportunity for those of us who wish to do so to celebrate the Incarnation and its meaning. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory . . ." (John 1:1,14).

Have A Merry Christmas!

Love,
Melva