

A Christmas Meditation  
December 25, 2023  
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All over the world faithful people come together today to praise and thank God for the birth of Jesus, whom we call “Emmanuel.” A Hebrew word translated in English, “God with us.” One word that tells the glorious mystery we celebrate at Christmas. Emmanuel. Let this word ring in your ears. Let it sing in your soul. Emmanuel. God with us.

Christians believe that Jesus’ birth is unlike anything that ever happened before or since. In this child God became incarnate. Jesus lived a fully human life. As an infant and child he was dependent upon the care of his family. He had much to learn as he grew up. As a man he experienced frustration, fatigue, disappointment, betrayal, grief, and pain, as well as love, joy, the power to teach and to heal, and a deep connection in prayer to God. He knew the suffering and pain of others, whom he healed, and he knew the sins of others, whom he forgave. He shared in joyous events like weddings and dinner parties. He participated in Jewish religious festivals. In his own experience and in his encounters with others, Jesus knew human life. He is Emmanuel, God with us.

I have often heard people say at Christmas time that they simply can’t get into the “Christmas Spirit” because of grief, or illness and pain, or concern for the problems of loved ones or the world, worries about the future, or any of the many troubles we are faced with in life. I understand what people mean. Their personal experiences prevent them from joining in the “jolly holiday spirit” the world pushes on us in this season.

But the true “Christmas Spirit” is much more profound than a “jolly holiday spirit.” A true “Christmas Spirit” embraces all of life, just as we know that God in Christ embraces all of life. God is with us in everything, in our joyful feasts and celebrations as well as in our fears and sorrows. God is with us. That is our hope, now and in the future. God knows, God loves, God heals, God forgives, God saves. We are never alone. God is with us.

Emmanuel. Let this word be your light in darkness, your courage when you are afraid, your strength when you are weak, your joy and hope and the glory of your life as you follow the man Jesus, born a tiny child as each of us was born, but born to be our savior.

Open your hearts and minds to receive the message of Emmanuel. Today as you pray and as you receive the sacrament, as you worship and adore the Holy Child, my hope is that you will commit your lives to God more deeply. Good people, God is with us. Let us be with God, now and always.

In Christ’s holy name. Amen.