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“That All May Know the Savior”
January 2011

The Gift That Keeps on Giving

In the retail business Christmas is long over. So is New Year’s, and the stores probably have hearts and cupids everywhere to move Valentine’s Day merchandise. Holidays have become synonymous with giving, which isn’t all bad. But the giving is often judged by the monetary value of the gift. “It’s the thought that counts” can be “code” for “I know how much you think of me by how much you spend.”

But Christmas is over, right? Why are we still talking about Christmas gifts?

According to our liturgical year, Christmas is going strong. According to our theology, Christmas never ends. And when we minister to one another in our church, Christmas happens every time we give the gift of Christ to one another. It happens every time we receive the gift of Christ in the Eucharist. And at the end of the liturgy we are instructed to go and give this gift away. The most common dismissal prayer is, “Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.” There are two others; “Go in the peace of Christ”, and “The Mass is ended, go in peace.”

These instructions carry the same message that the angels gave to the shepherds at the birth of our Savior:

“Glory to God in the highest
and on earth peace to those on whom
his favor rests.”

When we give peace, we give glory to God.

I received an early gift this past Christmas. I was invited to give Advent retreats which explored some of the many ways that Mary lived her “Yes” to God throughout her life. We looked at how Mary gave glory to God in her own life. The retreatants then reflected on their own life and how they give glory to God, how their life magnifies God’s goodness in their ministry. In other words, for all of us, how do we bring

Christmas to life in our lives every day? How do we bring to life the spirit of Christmas throughout the year?

An ipod might be very cool. In my life, a new toaster oven would be considered cool. But when I don't have something, when I am without, I have the opportunity to think about the gift of peace, the gift of Christ. I think about all the ways I receive this gift; in the sacraments, and in the everyday encounters with the good people who show the face of Jesus to me in their goodness.

So whether it is the Christmas season or ordinary time, we will be having a Christmas meal at our house. Mass in the morning, dinner at night, and everything in between- it's all Christmas.