

Archbishop Lori recalls Christmases past, looks back at 2017

Archbishop William E. Lori recalled that midnight Mass was the highlight of the family Christmas celebrations. The parish where he grew up had a particularly beautiful choir that helped make the Mass a memorable event, even as a kid.

After returning home, they family opened Christmas presents, and his mother would make a huge meal.

In all of his years, he has never missed spending Christmas with his parents, despite living apart from them. After he celebrates Mass, he always flies home. "I manage to get there by Christmas night. ... Just to be at home and be with my parents at Christmas is a great gift."

The archbishop made the reflections in an interview for the "Catholic Baltimore" radio show, which will air Dec. 24 and Dec. 31 on WCBM 680 AM. The show airs at 9:30 a.m. after the radio Mass, with a rebroadcast at 6:30 p.m. the same day.

"I would have to say that when I was a kid, of course, the things that you would get for Christmas occupied pride of place. You never would admit that, though, but getting the bicycle, getting the GI Joe and the granddaddy of them all was the Visible Chassis," a plastic model of a car chassis.

"As I've grown older, it is clearly the feast itself that we're really celebrating - the incarnation of the Savior, the advent of salvation, the welcoming of Jesus into the world and into our hearts and homes. That is really the joy of Christmas."

He said the church is glad to see people who come to Mass especially for Christmas. "First of all, I'm glad to see them. Thank goodness they come at Christmas and Easter. It's an opportunity to preach the Gospel in a way that might connect with them. It's an opportunity to extend a warm welcome. It's an opportunity not only for the priest but also for the regular parishioners who attend every week to welcome those they don't usually see - even if it means getting displaced from their favorite pew, even if it means you can find a parking place," the archbishop said.

He said the presence of additional people in the pews at Christmas and Easter should encourage Catholics to become missionary disciples in order to make sure our churches are full all year round.

Archbishop Lori also reflected on the loss to the church in Maryland of two leaders – Cardinal William H. Keeler, retired archbishop of Baltimore, and Bishop William Newman, retired auxiliary bishop, who passed away in 2017.

He rejoiced in the new ministry of two new auxiliary bishops – Bishop Mark. E. Brennan and Bishop Adam J. Parker – ordained Jan. 19, who join Bishop Denis J. Madden in assisting him to serve the archdiocese.

Learn more about “Catholic Baltimore” and listen online.