

Keeping our focus on Him

Recently I was dining at a restaurant in Frederick, and, while dining, I had a good conversation with the waitress who was serving me. It was lunchtime, it was very busy, and the restaurant seemed to be a little understaffed that day. There were many there who were either having “office Christmas party” lunches and apparently many who had been Christmas shopping (including myself!) before stopping there to get a bite to eat. So it was pretty full, and a bit hectic behind the counter and in the kitchen.

Before leaving, I wished her a “merry Christmas” and told her “not to work too hard.” She gave a thankful smile, but also was reflective for a moment.

“Yes,” she said “I wish people would just think more about the season, and what it’s all about.”

She was also a bit frustrated with the impatient - sometimes angry! - and often ungrateful attitude of customers at this time of year.

“Yes, you’re absolutely right,” I said. So I gave her a compassionate “God bless you” and smiled and she thanked me for that. I could see the gratitude she had for the gift of those words right on her face.

I thought of that as I was writing my “Christmas message” for my parishioners - and now share it here in my blog. How dangerously, subtly easy it is to lose sight of Christ and the “reason for the season” in the midst of rushing to fulfill family and social demands, finish our Christmas shopping, decorating and cleaning our homes and even just having a simple lunch out at a restaurant - and thinking of how we are blessed.

Can you imagine your life without Christ? Without Jesus? How different everything - everything! - indeed would be. Jesus was born for us, as “Emmanuel” - “God with us” - not for simple sentimentality, for as nice as that may seem.

No. Indeed, it was for nothing less than to save our lives. The wood of the manger was at the beginning of the Lord’s life. The wood of the Cross was the end, leading to another more glorious beginning! May the Christ Child bless us all with the

Christmas grace of keeping Christ at the center of our minds and hearts this holiday, and may God bless us with safe travels and serenity amidst our families and loved ones. But perhaps most of all may He fill us with a gratitude and thanksgiving for Him, that affects the way we live and act toward those around us, wherever we may be. For He is the reason for Christmas.