

Lasting love

I know that the church's official Christmas season is over with the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, but I wanted to squeeze one more bit of the Christmas season for us.

On Christmas Eve I was out walking when suddenly a boy and little girl came running out of their house. The big brother said to me, knowingly, "We're putting oats out on the lawn for the reindeer!" I was so moved in that moment. I thought that, 60 years from now, when the kids would be about my age, they would still remember putting oats out for Santa's reindeer. Thanks to all the parents who made Christmas magical for their kids.

Thanks also to all those who put up lights for the holidays. Whether it was 34th street in Hampden, "the house" on Gittings Avenue, one of many elaborate displays, or maybe just a single candle in a window, your light helped to scatter the darkness. Let your life be that light for the rest of the year.

I was also reminded of a personal parable in my own life. For many years, at Christmas time, I would bring Christmas decorations to the tellers at a Provident Bank Branch. As the years went on, and different tellers replaced the ones to whom I had given the gifts, I noticed the decorations were still put out, but the people then working had no idea that I had given the gifts. Eventually, Provident Bank was bought out by M&T Bank, and the whole branch location was shut down.

Isn't that a parable of life? In the first stage we do good for the people we can do good for. Then another generation, who doesn't know us, comes along. The good we did goes on, but we are forgotten. In the third stage, life simply shifts, and what we did and who we were are completely forgotten.

Future generations will know as much about us as we know of those who lived here 10,000 years ago. We know virtually nothing about those people, and their hopes and dreams.

While memories of individuals do not last, what does last is love. We are here because past generations dared to love enough to keep life going. May we be

conscious of sharing as much love as we can each day with as many people as possible. One day that will be all that's left of us. And it will be enough.

Finally, during the holidays, in song and conversation, we often express the desire that Christmas could last forever. If we look at the true meaning of Christmas it does. Allow me to close with this poignant piece of poetry by G.K. Chesterton. My hope is that this verse might appear on every church bulletin next year during the Christmas season. Chesterton writes:

*"No love that in a family dwells,
No caroling in frosty air,
Nor all the steeple-shaking bells
Can with this single Truth compare -
That God was man in Palestine
And lives today in Bread and Wine."*

The God who came once in history comes every day on our altars.