

Seek power of Christ's unconditional love

And so this is Christmas. The words sing in the air and they resound in our hearts. Christmas - Christ's Mass! Christ, born once in Bethlehem, born again on our altars in the Mass, the Eucharist, and born again inside us. Can it get any better than this? Christmas touches what is deepest in our hearts, the spirit of giving. God who gave everything, his very self, invites us to give everything. If each of us lived entirely for each other, if each of us loved each other unconditionally, utopia would come. Heaven will have come to earth. At Christmas, heaven has come to earth. We have the power to live like God. We share the life of God, not in some poetic fashion, but in a real manner.

There's a touching moment in every Mass, a moment easy to miss. As the priest pours a few drops of water in the chalice of wine, wine soon to become the Blood of Christ, he prays: "May we come to share the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share our humanity!" Christmas fulfills that petition. The great St. Augustine summed it up when he said: "God has become human, that humans might become God."

As Christians we have heard the words before, and what we have heard we often take for granted. That's why I always love stories of people who come to believe through their own search and introspection. Often the search for God begins with some type of crisis. That was true for Lester Levenson.

Lester was a non-believer. In the early 1950s, he suffered two major heart attacks. Lester was told that he had two weeks to live. He went home, sad and depressed. He was a brilliant man - a chemical engineer, a mechanical engineer. He had won a scholarship to Rutgers in the 1920s when only one was given each year.

"What did I miss?" he asked himself.

As he became more and more introspective, he discovered two things about himself. First, he discovered that he was unhappiest when he wanted to be loved. Wanting

love meant he didn't have. Then, he realized that he was happiest when he was loving. So he decided to die happy! He decided to spend the last two weeks of his life loving everyone and everything unconditionally.

The second thing he discovered was all of the negative energy he was carrying – all the apathy, the grief, the fear, the lust, the anger, the pride. So he would bring up each feeling or thought over and over until he had let every negative thought or feeling go.

Lester acknowledged that it was only Christ-like love that made it possible to love everyone and everything – enemies as well as friends, admirers as well as detractors. Christ had given us the power of unconditional love.

What he also acknowledged was that it was only from the awareness of divinity within us that we could expel the dark feelings and thoughts. When we are caught in the throes of feelings of fear and anger and lust, our feelings can seem bigger than we are. When we identify with the divinity within us we recognize that we are infinitely bigger than all those thoughts and feelings. We can expel them as Christ could expel the dark forces that he faced.

This Christmas, then, in the midst of all the trees and trimmings, let's not forget the heart of the feast and the power that this feast gives us to change our lives. In the words of the great St. Basil: "We have become what is otherwise impossible to believe. We have become God!"