



A Christmas Message from Bishop Lawrence C. Provenzano

December 2023

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

As we move now toward the Christmas season, I am reminded of my childhood, during which time the people in my family, mostly the women, would talk, "making Christmas." It was a shorthand expression that talked the reality of, they're having to create the scenarios in which we, as a family, would celebrate the Feast of the Incarnation. The women, particularly, would be preparing food, making sure that presents were wrapped, that houses were decorated, that trees were in place.

There is a reality for you, and for me, and for the whole Church about making Christmas in this time and in this age, the sense at which we must make Christmas, recognizing that God made Christmas.

We read this in the birth narratives in Luke's gospel. We certainly are reminded in the prologue to John's gospel, of, "The Word was with God, and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

So, if we recognize that God made Christmas and that our efforts to create the scenario in which we celebrate the Feast of the Incarnation should be a reminder, a prompt, for you and for me to "Make Christmas."

I'd like to suggest that as the Church prepares for this celebration, as we enter the 12 days of Christmas, and celebrate the season, that each of us spend time recognizing our need to make Christmas, not just in the hectic activities and all the frantic movement of people, and places, and celebrations that we will all be a part of, but in the quiet silence of our hearts, the prayer in which we engage Jesus as friend, as we engage Jesus in our prayer, in our contemplation, in our settling into the reality of God with us.

You see, friends, if we don't have that reality in our own personal lives, if, individually, we don't recognize the need to make Christmas with ourselves, then all the outward, invisible expressions, the gifts, the trees, the decorations, the preparation of food, all become less what they are called to be, a reminder that God is with us.

In the midst of this crazy world in which we live, in which we seem to be so fixed on destruction, and war, and hatred, and bigotry, and prejudice, we must find that quiet place in which we dwell with the God who is incarnate, and then allow ourselves to be the vehicle by which that incarnate love is made in the lives of the people around us, and so we will prepare.

We will live into the franticness of this season.

We will move toward Christmas day and the 12 days that will follow to celebrate the Incarnation, but I implore you to spend the quiet, prayerful time necessary to know who Jesus is in your own life, to have that rebirth of a relationship with God, made one of us, and then from that place, to live out that love, that joy, that hope, in the midst of the world in which we live.

The call is for us to make Christmas again, and again, and again, both in the church, in our communities, in our neighborhoods, in our families, and within ourselves.

Sisters and brothers, have a holy and blessed beginning to this Christmas season, and a blessed and joyful start to the New Year.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Lawrence C. Provenzano". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a cross at the beginning.

The Rt. Rev. Lawrence C. Provenzano
Bishop of Long Island