

Bishop Provenzano's Christmas Message

December 23, 2024

As we come to the end of Advent and approach the beginning of the Christmas season, I am struck by the fact that for more than a month now, all around us in stores and in homes and neighborhoods, almost anywhere you go, Christmas has been celebrated and people are in full engagement with the season. It always reminds me that I need to go back to some of the basics of our faith. And I wanna share with you some words from the prologue of the Gospel according to Saint John, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. And the word became flesh and lived among us." I recall those words often, particularly as we approach the Christmas season, because it becomes so apparent to so many that the idea that Christmas is part of a season of gift giving, of self-giving, of, sometimes, self-sacrifice. It is a time when we pay close attention to the people around us and for those, most particularly, who are in need.

In all of the images that we experienced for well more than a month before Christmas even arrives, reminding us that Christmas is coming, we can be taken up with the lights and all of the decorations and the images of what we have come to understand as the secular celebrations of Christmas. But then it comes time for us to remind ourselves why we celebrate this great feast, why the Feast of the Incarnation is so important. And again, I use the words of Saint John's Gospel, "And the word became flesh and lived among us." What a great gift God has given us. What an opportunity for us to engage in that same kind of self-giving.

The celebration of the Incarnation gives us the opportunity to recognize that Christmas is every day. Every day of our lives where we are given the opportunity to flesh out the love of God given to us in Jesus Christ when we are offered the opportunity day in and day out, whether there is decorations and trees and caroling and family celebrations or not. That in fact our call as the people of God, the Church, is to celebrate incarnate love in the lives of the people with whom we live and move and have our being.

And so, sisters and brothers, I invite you in this Christmas season to be the incarnate love of God in the lives of the people around you. Share your faith, share your joy, share your sorrows and your fears. Be real and tangible with each other in your expression of love and concern for one another. And in fact, bring the love of Jesus Christ into the lives of the people around you, in your neighborhood, in your school, in your workplace, in your church. You see, Christmas, as a historic event, the birth of Jesus, is

The Right Reverend Lawrence C. Provenzano, Bishop

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a moment for us to focus our attention and to move beyond it then to every day of our lives as we celebrate incarnate love with the people around us.

And so, the call for this Christmas season, brothers and sisters, is to be the love of Christ in the world, be that gift that is given to each and every person. Go out of your way in the same way that you go out of your way to buy that perfect gift, to be that perfect gift in the lives of the people around you. You see, if you've noticed it or not, the world around us needs the love of Christ. And it can only come to each person through another person who is sharing and fleshing out that love with them each and every day. Brothers and sisters, have a joyous and holy Christmas. Allow it to spread the love of Christ across all the places in which you find yourselves. And as we approach the celebration of a new year, bring that love of Christ with you into this new year as we celebrate as God's people.

Merry and happy Christmas, and a blessed and holy new year.

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

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

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