

LOOKING THROUGH STAINED GLASS



A Column by Fr. Tom



All I Want for Christmas is Christ...for Me and YOU

When we were young, we were asked to prepare a Wish List for Santa Claus. On our wish list, we might put toys or games, or maybe even a Red Ryder BB gun. Christmas morning found us in a pile of wrapping paper and bows, flitting from one toy or game to another. However, in a few short weeks (or sometimes days), we had used up all the fun from them and they became just another item to clutter our bedroom.

As we grow older, our "wish list" contains larger and more expensive items, like electronics and fancy clothes. But even those items seem to lose their luster in a short while. (What ever happened to my Palm Pilot?) They all have an expiration date, don't they? Even the items that we wish for today will seem like old hat in just a short amount of time. The planned obsolescence of today is not just planned by manufacturers and retailers, but it's planned by us too. (I can't use that any longer, it's last year's model.) Sure, we're grateful for the gifts that we receive, but our real gratitude is due to the thoughtfulness and generosity of the giver.

So where do we find a Christmas gift for ourselves or for someone else that won't expire? How do we give someone a gift that will truly last? There is one, and it is the gift that was given to us before we were even born. It is the gift that God the Father gave us over 2000 years ago. It is the gift of Jesus. Besides the generosity of the giver, we are grateful for the gift of Christ Himself. Jesus freed us from slavery to sin. He showed us the way to return to God and taught us about God's love and mercy.

Now, here's the really fantastic part. We are not just receivers of this great gift; we can also be givers. Jesus, in His commandments to us, told us

that we needed to love God and also to love one another. When we share love with one another, we are sharing God, for God is love. What's the greatest gift you can give to another? It is love. True love has no cost. True love has no expiration date. True love lasts. True love is Christ.

How can you give this kind of love this Christmas? It's not about what we buy for people; it's about what we do for and with them. For example, can you spend a little extra time talking to your kids? Or your parents? Can you finally work on forgiving the grudge you've had with a brother or sister? Can you be the first one who puts her pride aside and reaches out? Can you share some time playing with your grandchildren? Can you really listen to that story about "when I was young," instead of just pretending to hear? Can you put down that phone or tablet and engage with the person who is sitting right in front of you? I promise you that this type of gift will mean more than anything you can wrap.

So what is my wish for you this Christmas? My wish is love. My wish is that you receive God's love for you and that you share it with another. And, as I said above, when we receive and give love, we receive and give Christ. So, yes, it's true: All I want for Christmas is Christ...

for me

and

YOU.

