CHRISTMAS 2020 SFTC

Imagine some space aliens looking down on us. What would they think Christmas is really about?

Shopping, presents: it’s all about the gifts, right? We’d say, “No, its about Jesus. Keep Christ in Christmas!”

But, in reality, it is about the gifts.

Not in the way we have commercialized it, made it all about buying and receiving things.

What’s the first thing kids ask each other at Christmas time?: “What’d you get? Did ya get what ya wanted?”

We all did it, right?

We gather to celebrate the greatest gift ever given: God became one of us, so that we could be one with God.

We can’t earn it. We can’t pay it back. What we can do is respond to it. We can pattern our lives around it.

A gift cannot be forced on us. That wouldn’t be a gift. So it is with Christ. We have to make room for Him.

That first Christmas, there was no room at the inn for Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

Are we making room for Him in our hearts, in our schedule? It doesn’t just happen.

If we want this gift, this greatest of all gifts, we have to make room. We have to make choices.

There is such a thing as being too busy. Not all things are of equal value.

Wise men and women put first things first.

As I said, we cannot earn this great gift or pay it back. But we can pay it forward. Christ is pure gift.

Christians are supposed to offer ourselves as a gift to others, in imitation of Him.

That’s how we find our true happiness, because we’re made in the image and likeness of God,

who gave Himself to us so completely.

That’s what we experience here at this table.

We receive the greatest gift, the fullness of God’s life in Christ Jesus.

Here we join ourselves to Christ as an offering to the Father, and to one another.

That’s why celebrating the Eucharist is the pattern of the Christian life.

It not only nourishes and empowers us, it also reinforces that habit of self-giving love,

which leads us to true happiness and freedom. And who doesn’t want that in their life?

I asked some high school students for ideas for a Christmas homily. They gave me some great insights:

First, when you really care about someone, you try to find the right gift. That shows you care about them,

that they’re important to you. Well, God gave us the perfect gift: He who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The One who brings True Freedom, and Victory over sin and death.

That’s how much our God cares for us!

Second, ask yourself what you really want for Christmas: gifts that are temporary, or gifts that are eternal?

Gifts that are can be lost and broken? Or gifts like Faith, Hope and Love?

What do we really want for Christmas?

The greatest gifts cannot be bought or sold. The greatest gifts are meant to be given away.

But even if we give them away, we don’t lose them.

In the weekday chapel at the cathedral, there’s a bronze image of the burning bush from the Book of Exodus.

Moses comes across this bush on Mt. Horeb. It was on fire, but it wasn’t consumed.

I loved looking at that image when I would celebrate Mass in the chapel.

It reminds me that love is an eternal flame. Love provides its own fuel.

When we make ourselves a gift for others, we’re not destroyed. We are re-created.

When we give away the gifts of love, mercy and compassion, we don’t lose them.

These are gifts that grow through being used, that flourish through being shared.

Have you ever heard of “re-gifting?” That’s when you receive a gift you don’t really want,

so you give it to someone else and act like you bought it for them. (Embarrassing if you get caught!)

But the gift of Christ is different: re-gifting is encouraged. In fact, it’s expected.

We just need to make sure we give the credit to God!

In the end, the most important question for us today is this:

What do we really want for Christmas?

Are we making room in our lives for the Greatest Gift of All?