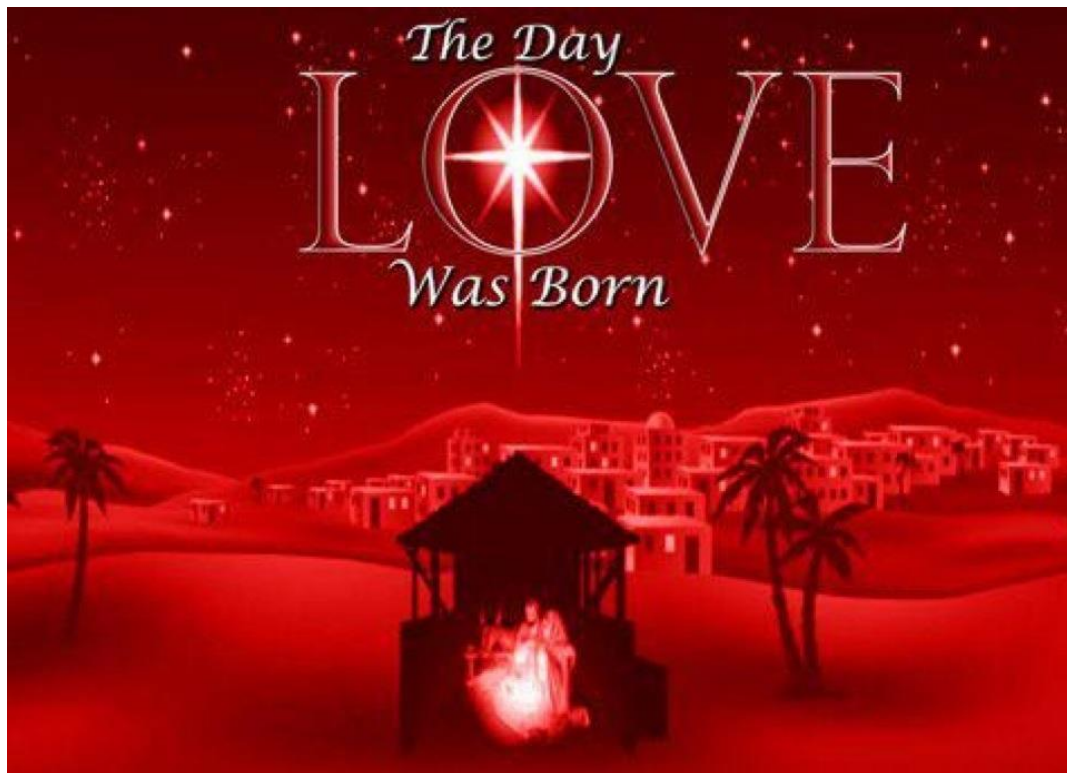


## Commentary to The Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, Christmas: The Power of Infinite Love



The Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, Christmas: The Power of Infinite Love

Holy Christmas to you all! To all our visitors: Thank you so much for joining our community in prayer. For our parishioners: thank you for making St. Neots-Buckden your family, not just a Church to go to, but a family to pray with. Happy and Holy Christmas to you all. As I was reflecting on our celebration, I asked myself what do we need to hear this particular Christmas? Many members of our parish and community are confronted with questions about the future, particularly in the area of employment. Many people have questioned their own value as they face the prospect of losing their jobs, or perhaps have already been let go. More than ever, people need to remember that their worth comes from God. It is who we are before God that matters, not our means of income. He loves us for whom we are, not for what we do. All good parents love their children for whom they are, not for what they do. Our Heavenly Father's love for us is infinitely greater than the love of even the best of parents.

He loves us with an unconditional love. The love that God has for us is beyond our comprehension. How can we understand that the Creator of the Universe loves us so much to send the Second Person to become one of us? It did not matter what roadblocks we put up as a people or as individuals. His love penetrated the barriers created by our hostility. We have been given the Gift of His Presence in our world and in our lives. This is what we celebrate on Christmas. I would like to create an analogy of God's love, using a situation that many families experience.

This is just an analogy, and perhaps it limps, but hopefully it can point towards the wonders of the mystery of Divine Love. The mother of the family could never be reconciled with the fact that the third of her five grown children would be absent for Christmas as he was for all family events. The father had been more concerned with his wife's grief, than the constant ache he felt within himself. Their

other four children had remained close to their parents. But child #3, Edward, was completely estranged from the family. No one knows why. All seemed well when he went off to college. It was difficult to see him because he was on the other coast, three thousand miles away, but they knew he was where he wanted to be and was doing well in school. Then the silence started. They didn't hear from him. When they called, he was at first curt.

When they asked what was wrong, he just said that he was too busy to keep in touch. Then he became hostile. He wouldn't even answer their calls. He was on a scholarship and worked for his other expenses; so he did not have to rely on home for financial support, although Mom and Dad had extra money set aside for each of their children's education. He didn't need his parents, at least not in his self-absorbed mind. When it came time to graduate, he sent his entire family a letter merely stating, "I'm getting my degree this Spring. I'd rather if you didn't come." His brothers and sisters were furious with the way he was treating his family. They tried to talk to him, but they were dealt with in the same manner as Mom and Dad. Years went by. Now Edward was in his late twenties. That's when a social worker called his parents.

Edward had dependency problems, drugs to be exact, and needed to be in a recovery program. He had no insurance or money for it. Mom and Dad researched and found the best program available, but that program would demand a lot of money and also the involvement of the immediate family. Mom and Dad could have easily picked a different program, but they wanted the best for their son, even if it demanded that they take a second mortgage out on their house, which they did. It was also clear to them that Edward needed them to be there with him, even if he refused to recognize this need. Mom left her job and moved out to the other coast. Dad visited regularly. Edward experienced how much his parents loved him. Their love was deeper than he ever imagined. All good parents would look for ways to do what Edward's parents did. Perhaps some of the parents here have sacrificed themselves and their futures for a rebellious child. If anyone were to ask you, "Why would you make so many sacrifices for a child who rejected you?" you would respond, "Because he is our child.

Our love is stronger than his rejection." By analogy, this is why our Heavenly Father sent the Word to become one of us. As a people and as individuals we rejected God. We had and perhaps have become too proud to need Him, too busy to give Him a place in our lives and, sadly, as a result, too empty to have meaningful lives. We need to experience His Presence to return to His Love. We need to experience His sacrifice to return to His Life. That is why He became one of us. The Christmas miracle is infinitely more than a mere event that took place over 2,000 years ago. Jesus comes today and every day seeking to enter each of our lives. He comes because God has a deep love for every single one of us. You are loved by God. I am loved by God. His love is infinitely more powerful than our rejection of His Love. His love is unconditional. You may say, "Father, you have no idea of the ways I've rejected God." Why do we do that? Why do we think that our rejection of God is more powerful than His Love? Why would Edward or any child who rejects his parents think that his rejection was more powerful than their love. Why would we think that our rejection of God is more powerful than the Tremendous Lover, the Almighty Lover. His love is stronger than our sins, infinitely stronger. He wants to enter our lives. He gives us the ability to allow Him into our lives. He forgives us. We need to forgive ourselves. Christmas is the celebration of the Presence of God among us in a way that we can experience His presence, as one of us. His name is Emmanuel, a name that means God is with His people. He is with us, right here, right now, and forever.

He is not a spiritual entity hidden in the great unknown of infinity. He has become the human being with whom we can establish a divine relationship. Mankind needed the physical presence of His Love to return to His Life. We each need the Presence of His Love to celebrate His Life within us. Christmas is the celebration of the Presence of God as one of us. The miracle of Christmas is the infinite depth of God's Love for each of us. He loves us with an unconditional love. He forgives us. He is with us. And the Word became Flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen His Glory, the Glory of the only Son of the Father. And we still experience His Glory, His Presence and His Love. And God speaks to us today not with words, but with the Word. He speaks with the Gift of His Son and says to each of us, "I love you."

Fr. Joseph Pellegrino, SJ