

Good morning and a very Merry Christmas. It hardly seems possible but at this time tomorrow there will be only 364 shopping days left until Christmas 2016. What will you buy for the one who has everything?

It's easy to be sarcastic about the materialism that so often seems to engulf Christmas. It seems to obscure the spiritual significance of the season. And we all know that the spiritual is superior to the material. No, we don't all know that. I don't know that. You and I live in a material world, our bodies and all of the bodies of every plant and animal who lives here have been designed by our creator to function in this material world. The Epistle of James tells us that our faith, a spiritual quality, must be demonstrated by our works, i.e., involvement in the material world for the benefit of those in need.

But that doesn't mean that the spiritual is unreal or unimportant. What we need is a way to be aware of it, to understand it, to properly relate to it, to have it direct our actions in this material world.

What do we buy for the one who has everything? No one has everything. Each of us lacks something. Most of us lack a great deal and the only thing that we all need is a way into the spiritual world, a way to break the code and find out what's going on in there. For thousands and thousands of years humanity has believed that there is somebody or something or some group of somebodies who somehow direct the events of this world in ways that we can't quite understand. What are their altitudes and values? What do they want from us? How can we ingratiate them or at least avoid alienating them?

About 2000 years ago when Augustus was Emperor of Rome and Quirinius was governor of Syria, a baby boy was born to a Jewish peasant girl named Mary, her husband's name was Joseph and the baby's name was Jesus. His life, ministry, death and resurrection proved to be the key to the code, the Rosetta Stone. The material that it radiated the spiritual truth God wanted us to live by the life he lived was totally infused by God's love ... infused with divine love and grace.

Any time an abstract, non material, hope, concept or ideal finds material expression we can speak of Incarnation. For example, man's long term desire to fly finally took physical expression with Orville and Wilbur Wright. That primitive airplane opened the door. Important as the Wright plane was the life, ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus were infinitely more important. This infusion of the spiritual into the material will continue to effect the whole human race. That is why we call it the Incarnation (in capital letters)

We celebrate that event on Dec. 25 each year. That doesn't mean that he was born on that exact day. That's just the day chosen to celebrate the event. The choice of day was complex and involved competition from non Christian religions. And their celebration of the vernal equinox. On or about that. But even if the date of Christmas may have a little pagan DNA in its heritage. Christ still defeated the pagans.

The materialistic, gift giving, fellowshiping, stomach stuffing way in which we celebrate the incarnation may seem to lack something in terms of solemnity. But that's not all bad. That joy

and festivity is what Ebenezer Scrooge was referring to when he uttered that well known phrase "bah humbug". It was more than his puritanical soul could tolerate. Just think of it a paid holiday day of joy, feasting, spending money instead of saving it, or better yet earning it for one's employer. How can people live like that? O bah Humbug, double humbug.

The reason for joy is the second gift we are given after the code. That gift was hope because we now knew of God's attitudes and values and that his love for us is at the top of the list. This little peasant boy Jesus, was so infused with divine love that he would give up his very life for us and our eternal well being. So God bless us all. God bless us everyone.

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