

Christmas Homily

A boy begs his father to get him a Christmas tree this year. Each year, the boy asks and the father tells him, "I don't want to pay for it." But the son kept begging. Unable to bear his son's whining, he picks up his ax one day and heads out of the house.

Thirty minutes later he returns with a great big Christmas tree. "How did you cut it down so fast?" his son asks. "I didn't cut it down," the father replies. "I got it from a tree lot. "Then why did you bring an ax?" "Because I didn't want to pay."

Dear Friends,

I wish you a Joy filled Christmas. Christmas brings joy to all of us for various reasons, especially when we are able to be with family. We are happy when you are happy. It doubles our joy. You are part of our faith family.

Every year, during the days leading up to Christmas, schools and parishes enact the Christmas story. Usually, children enact these scenes and hence these scenes are all the more lovely and heavenly! A few years back, when we were returning home after one such school play, one of my friends suddenly posed this question: "Was the first Christmas this lovely? This joyful?" That question was a wake-up call!

It has both reactions. If you take up the different reactions of the people involved in the scripture, we can say it was glorious. Starting with Angel Gabriel, Elizabeth, the womb (John the Baptist), Zacariah, shepherds, Simeon, Anna the Prophetess, Herod the king, the Magi from the East, Joseph, and finally Mary, the mother. These are all involved during the birth of Jesus. Their reactions were of joy, glory, and peace.

At the same time, we could definitely say there were pain and difficulties underwent during those days. Judea was covered by soldiers and it was not easy to go out. Today we see how the places of war have been affected, especially women who are affected so much in those places. Imagine how fearful it would be during the time of the original Christmas!

This year, we remember the 800th year of St. Francis of Assisi 's creation of nativity in a cave. He created the first ever nativity scene in 1223. He said whenever we stand near the nativity scene anywhere, we should be reminded of Bethlehem. This year it was a blessing for me to visit the place of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem.

We have a lot of challenges and struggles in our families and in our country and around the world. Sometimes we say we have enough on our plates ; we don't need anymore.

All these people had struggles, but with Jesus's presence, every struggle became joyful. This Christmas brings us with the same joy and peace to us and to the world. I recently read a story which I would share with you.

There was a couple who lived a few blocks from San Quentin prison. The two were not sure they would ever get married or stay together. But they had given birth to a child. It was a terrible birth, deprived of oxygen, the doctors told them their child had only six months to live. They were so sad. They made a decision to keep the child.

They named him and baptized him and took him home. They rented a machine to accomplish the breathing process for him. During the life of six months, one of the parents had to remain close enough to him to hear even the tiniest change of tone in his breathing. They traded off. They were not terrified or burdened, but calm. Death was on its way, no illusions, but they just plain loved this utterly helpless child anyway.

The mother said that she and others could see the love emanating from the child to them. That child's love helped his parents get married and stay together for so many years.

We have the same situation in our families. God brings joy and peace in our struggles. Let Christmas bring you God's love and peace.