



From the Pastors Desk:

“Christ the Lord is born today; today, the Saviour has appeared. Earth echoes songs of angel choirs, archangels' joyful praise. Today on earth Christ's friends exalt: Glory to God in the highest, alleluia.”
(adapted from Luke 2:11)

Today the feast announcing the Incarnation (birth) of the Lord begins and will continue until the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (January 13, 2019). During these days of feast we will announce God's Epiphany to the world, the glorious appearance of heaven on earth. We, in our liturgical language, do not proclaim Christmas as the “birthday” of Jesus, but rather Christmas is the actual birth of the Lord, **Jesus is born today!** Imagine that, Christ is actually born today in our very midst. As the joyous Christmas hymn “Joy to the World” announces: *“Joy to the world, the Lord is come!”*

We Christians now face a challenging task, to keep Christmas throughout the entire Christmas liturgical season (until January 13th). While we journeyed throughout the four weeks of Advent the rest of the world seemed to be celebrating Christmas. By the time you read this most of the Christmas decorations in stores are already gone, yet we have just put ours up in the church. People have already stopped greeting each other in public with a “Merry Christmas”, yet today we say it for the first time in church. Many people are winding down their busy pre-Christmas social calendar, yet we as Christians are encouraged to increase ours during the Christmas season. Sadly, once the Christmas turkey has been eaten many people seem to say, *“well that's Christmas for another year”*, yet our feasting in church has just begun. And the city does not help when they announce that garbage pick-up for live trees takes place before the Christmas season is even over. What does all this mean?

Well, perhaps if we reflect upon the birth of a child it might help. Parents prepare for the birth of a new child and once the child is born they celebrate, they do not celebrate to the same extent

before the actual birth. The pre-birth celebrations are of a lesser sort, yet the celebration begins in earnest once the birth takes place. The celebration does not just happen on the day of the birth and then the next day it suddenly ends – the celebration hopefully continues for many more days – presenting the child for the first time to relatives and friends, and then to the church on the day of baptism. For Christians Christmas should be celebrated in the same fashion. Celebrations before Christmas (Advent) are to a lesser degree in comparison to those from Christmas day onward. We are invited to celebrate the Incarnation of the Lord, once it happens, for many days, announcing to family and friends that Christ is born, culminating with the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord on January 13th.

So what can we do to continue our Christmas celebrations up to the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord? We can continue to greet each other with a “*Merry Christmas*” throughout the entire Christmas season. If we have exterior Christmas lights on our houses, turn them on each night for the entire Christmas season. We can keep our interior Christmas decorations up for the entire Christmas season, particularly if we have an artificial tree. We could use the Christmas season as a time to celebrate family, travel to and spend some time with those relatives we do not see often enough. Host some Christmas socials in your home. You might even consider not opening all your Christmas gifts on the first day of Christmas, spread them over the entire season and make it a teachable moment for your children (this might have to wait until next year if you have already opened your gifts). Do not put away your Children's Christmas story books until the season is over – continue to read stories to them each night of the Christmas season. In your grace at meals continue to pray in thanksgiving for the coming of the Lord. I am sure you could add even more ideas to this list. Just think about how much joy you would miss if you ended Christmas celebrations on sun-down December 25th.

As Saint Augustine once said: “*God became human so that humans*

might become God”. On this feast of Christ we rejoice in the fullness of Christ revealed to us – we are born in Christ, and Christ is born in us! What a truly incredible thing to celebrate.

“For lo! The days are hast'ning on, by prophets seen of old, when with the ever-circling years shall come the time foretold, when peace shall over all the earth its ancient splendors fling, and all the world give back the song which now the angels sing.”

Merry Christmas on behalf of the staff of Saint Francis:

Deacon Raphael Ma, CR, Miss Ruthann Fisher, Mrs. Terrianne Moulton, Ms. Alice Soeder, Mr. Gary Howell, Mr. David O'Farrell, Mr. Douglas O'Farrell, Mrs. Anna Szabo, and myself, *Father Tim Uniac, CR*

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