



## **A Christmas Message**

**Reverend Giuseppe Mattei (December 24, 2021)**

In the first 1200 years of Christianity, the most prominent feast was Easter, the celebration of Christ's resurrection. Around 1200, Francis of Assisi entered the scene, and he felt we didn't need to wait for God to love us through the cross and resurrection. He believed God loved us from the very beginning and showed this love by becoming incarnate in Jesus. He popularized what we take for granted today, the great Christian feast of Christmas. But Christmas only started being popular in the 13th century.

The realization is that if God had become flesh and taken on materiality, physicality, and humanity, then the problem of our unworthiness was solved from the very beginning! God "saved" us by becoming one of us! Throughout the centuries, God had affirmed to be the Emmanuel, God-with-us. With the incarnation, God put flesh on his Word and we see how important we are to God that God would want to walk in our midst, and go through what we go through.

However, just as we are celebrating the birth of Jesus, we need to remember that it's not just a birthday and a great mystery we are celebrating. We live rejoicing with the expectation that Christ is forever being born in the human soul and into history.

So, we need to ask ourselves: If God has already become incarnate in Jesus how are we living our lives during the time allotted to us?

We're called to awaken to what's already in our midst. It's time to awaken to a new consciousness of God. The God born in our midst and heart is loving us into something new, into something more whole. We are not called to love a God who is out there and will see one day; we're called to love a God who's already there.

It's time for us to wake up! You know, as if we're asleep in the manger, not Jesus! Jesus is alive in our midst. What if we're in the manger and God is already awakened in our midst and we're so fallen asleep, we're so unconsciously asleep that God is sort of looking for "someone to get up and help bring the gifts into the world?"

In the words of Howard Thurman:

Let's awaken to what God is doing in us and what God is seeking to become in us.

The Christmas lights are on. Carols are sung and Christmas music is played.

“When the song of the angels is stilled,  
When the star in the sky is gone,  
When the kings and princes are home,  
When the shepherds are back with their flock,  
The work of Christmas begins:  
To find the lost,  
To heal the broken,  
To feed the hungry,  
To release the prisoner,  
To rebuild the nations,  
To bring peace among [sisters and] brothers,  
To make music in the heart.”

Howard Thurman's words call us to more than festivity and nostalgia. He calls us to what Jesus called us to, the work of

being Christian in a world that seems to value rudeness and selfishness over kindness and charity.

It is a tall order: find the lost, heal the broken, feed the hungry, release the prisoner, rebuild relationships, bring peace, and sing a new song. No one of us can do it all, but we can do our part. And together we can be the Body of Christ born to the world. Merry Christmas.