



# Bringing Home the Word

*The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) (A)*  
December 25, 2022

## The Gift that Gives Forever

By Ron Rolheiser, OMI

The angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord” (Luke 2:10–11).

The fact of a savior born for us does not bring us immediate festive joy. Our world remains wounded; wars, selfishness, and bitterness linger. Our hearts remain wounded; pain lingers. For a Christian, just as for everyone else, there will be incompleteness, illness, death, senseless hurt, broken dreams, cold, hunger, lonely days of bitterness, and a lifetime of longing.

The Incarnation does not promise heaven on earth. It promises heaven in heaven. Here on earth, it promises us something else—God’s presence in our lives. This presence redeems because knowing that God is with us is what ultimately empowers us to give up bitterness, to forgive, and to move beyond cynicism and bitterness. When God is with us, then pain and happiness are not mutually exclusive, and the agonies and riddles of life do not exclude deep meaning and deep joy.

We need to celebrate Christmas heartily. Maybe we won’t feel the same excitement we once felt as children—when we were excited about tinsel, lights, Christmas carols, and special gifts and special food. But something more important is still available, namely the sense that God is with us in our lives, in our joys as well as in our shortcomings.

The word was made flesh. That is an incredible thing. It should be celebrated with tinsel, lights, and songs of joy. If we understand Christmas, then carols will flow naturally from our lips. +

This article is an excerpt from the *Daybreaks* series, published by Liguori Publications for the seasons of Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter. Fr. Ron Rolheiser has authored several in this series of seasonal devotionals. To learn more and review our complete list of *Daybreaks* authors, visit [Liguori.org](http://Liguori.org).

### A Word from Pope Francis

The power of this Child, Son of God and Son of Mary, is not the power of this world, based on might and wealth; it is the power of love. It is the power that gives new birth, forgives sin, reconciles enemies, and transforms evil into good. It is the power of God.

URBI ET ORBI, ROME,  
DECEMBER 25, 2019



## Sunday Readings

### Isaiah 52:7–10

All the ends of the earth can see /  
the salvation of our God.

### Hebrews 1:1–6

[God] spoke to us through a son,  
whom he made heir of all things  
and through whom he created the  
universe.

### John 1:1–18 or 1:1–5, 9–14

The light shines in the darkness, and  
the darkness has not overcome it.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS



- What blessings have I received today?
- How can I be a blessing to someone else?

# The Gift of Love and the Value of Thanks

By Paige Byrne Shortal

Did you come to church today to please someone else? Perhaps your parents or grandparents or your spouse? Whether you came willingly or under pressure, I hope I'm not being presumptuous when I acknowledge your gift. Coming to church to make someone else happy is an act of love, and you might be giving them their favorite Christmas present.

I'm a convert and find myself fascinated by people who grew up in the Church and then stopped going to Mass. I tend to ask them a lot of personal questions: What takes the place of church for you? Who do you pray to? What do you use as a guide when you make moral choices? If you have children, how will you teach them right from wrong? Who (or what) will you turn to if you are suffering or someone you love is suffering? What gives you meaning and purpose in this life?

Paul Tillich said there are no atheists; that we all make something or someone our god. We must just make sure our god is one who is worthy of the investment of our lives. Today the Christian community celebrates the birth of God, who promises an abundant return on our investment.

I've learned that it's possible to grow up going to church and still not know much about Jesus. A priest friend admitted he didn't really know Jesus until he was in the last years of preparing for ordination. He decided he'd better do



something about it so he sat down and read the Gospel of Matthew straight through. I decided I wanted to do the same. Be warned! This is life-changing stuff.

On a lighter note, here's a true story from my husband's family. There were two older relatives who attended Midnight Mass after many years away from the Church. One whispered, "Hey, that's a woman reading up there." And the other responded, "Yeah, and either that's English or my Latin is better than I thought."

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After my oldest had been on his own for a while, he called one night to tell me he had discovered he could not sit down to a nice meal without saying Grace. He

didn't want to say the traditional "Bless us, O Lord..." but he did feel the need to say "thank you."

Later, a month or so after Christmas, I began to get the calls: "Did he get the package, the check? I haven't heard from him." So I called him and suggested that while thank-you notes did require more organization than exists in the lives of most young bachelors, they are part of a "Grace Way of Life." You don't eat thanks, wear it, use it, or spend it before you say it—"thank you"—to the giver.

What do I want my last words to be? Not "Give me more!" or "Not fair!" or "No!" I would like to be the kind of person whose last words are simply: "Thank You."

Merry Christmas. +

***On Christmas, we celebrate  
the birth of God, who  
promises an abundant  
return on our investment.***

**PRAYER**

***Lord Jesus, so that there may  
be peace among the nations,  
within communities and families,  
and in our hearts,  
we pray—Be born in us,  
be born in our world.***

The Redemptorists

## WEEKDAY READINGS

December 26–31

**Monday**, St. Stephen:  
Acts 6:8–10; 7:54–59 / Mt 10:17–22  
**Tuesday**, St. John:  
1 Jn 1:1–4 / Jn 20:1a, 2–8  
**Wednesday**, Holy Innocents:  
1 Jn 1:5–2:2 / Mt 2:13–18

**Thursday**, Octave of Christmas:  
1 Jn 2:3–11/Lk 2:22–35  
**Friday**, Holy Family: Sir 3:2–6, 12–14 or  
Col 3:12–21 or 3:12–17 / Mt 2:13–15, 19–23  
**Saturday**, Octave of Christmas:  
1 Jn 2:18–21 / Jn 1:1–18

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