

## Christmas 2014

### Theme: What does the birth of Jesus Christ mean to me?

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A question presented itself to me this week and I offer it for your Christmas reflection:

“What does the birth of Jesus Christ mean to me?”

Notice, as I immediately did, that the question does not ask: “what does **Christmas** mean to me?”

That question would open all sorts of **nostalgic memories of Christmases past**, or perhaps warm hopes and expectations of family togetherness or even some mushy sentimentality of the Hallmark Channel variety.

The question is instead about the birth of Jesus Christ.

Nor does the question ask for a **theological discussion** on the general implications of the birth of Jesus Christ on the condition and history of humanity.

A conversation in **abstract generalities** will not do here.

Rather, the inquiry is **pointedly personal**: “What does the birth of Jesus Christ mean **to me**?”

First, what it means to me is that everything I experience and feel as a human person – **exhilaration and despair, satisfaction and depression, accomplishment and failure, intimacy and loneliness**, all of it – Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has experienced.

As the Scripture says, we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses.

The birth of Jesus Christ as a human person means he is **just like me**; he understands me and knows me.

It also means, however, I **cannot make lame excuses** before him because he knows what it's like to be me.

I am sometimes also blown away when I think that the **Lord God Creator** of the enormous universe the extent of which we have not yet fathomed and the microscopic depth of which we have not yet dissected,

...that Lord Creator felt we human beings here on planet earth **sufficiently important enough or special enough** that we deserved a **personal intervention** of the divine self to be saved from our sinful selves.

In other words, there is something about me, about us, that **God loves so much** God felt it crucial to come among us personally and teach us the way of truth and salvation.

With the immensity of the universe, how is it that among the billions of human beings on this lonely planet circling a rather non-descript star in this moment in history **I matter to the divine majesty**?

And yet apparently **I do and so do you and so does every last one of us** – in fact we are loved enough that our God was born among us! Go figure!

Thirdly, and perhaps this one is going to sound a bit harsh, but what the birth of Jesus means to me is that **he had to die**.

If he was **born as a human being, he had to die** – just like the rest of us.

And if he had to die, then he had to **show us how to die**, how to go through that most awful of all human experiences still trusting, still believing, still holding on to his Father.

And wow, **did he ever do that!**

He showed us not only how to die but how the Father will raise us from death to live eternally beyond the reach of death forever.

So there, friends, are a couple of my response to what the birth of Jesus Christ means to me:

It means he shares my experience of being human exactly.

It means I am important enough, we human beings are important enough, for God to become one of us and save us from ourselves.

It means he had to die, like all of us and so he teaches and shows us the truth about death.

How would you answer the question: *“What does the birth of Jesus of Nazareth mean to you?”*

Perhaps the question will spark **some Christmas reflection** for you or maybe even some **shared discussion** in your family this holiday.

May our celebration of the Birth of Christ mean **peace for your hearts and homes!**

May it soon also mean **desperately needed peace and a cessation of violence** to war-weary parts of our world and for the many refugees produced by war!

May the Birth of Christ mean **a deepening of understanding and equality of justice** in our American communities and our hard-working police and court systems.

May the Eucharist we are about to celebrate **bring us together** around the One whose birth we celebrate.