

- Well...a very merry and blessed Christmas to all of you.
- I hope and pray that you are able to spend some good time with the family...renewing those Christmas traditions, and especially those family bonds so important in our day...with family members often scattered across the country and even around the world.
- If you can't be together, at least get in some good taking or Skype time with them.
- What people would have given for such things as Skyping even just a couple of decades ago! So make good use of them.

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- Oh, the beauties of the Christmas season...the lights, the tinsel, the presents under the tree...and the greatest gift of all—the world's salvation coming through a young girl, as she gives birth to her first-born son and lays him in a manger.
  - Not just any child (if there IS just “any” child!)...but one who is truly the Son of God...born of a virgin girl—something otherwise utterly impossible.
  - Not that this Son of God did not already exist...but, to that point in time, He existed only in Spirit...infinite, like the Father and the Holy Spirit of love between them.
  - But...nine months ago...the Holy Spirit—the Creator—touched the womb of Mary so that she conceived a Son—into whom was melded the completeness of the divinity of God—one person with two natures—both God and Man—and not only for 33 years of Jesus' earthly life, but for the remainder of eternity.
  - Not that the 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Holy Trinity was “confined” within that body. He gave up none of His divinity, nor did He refuse to take upon Himself anything of humanity.
  - He was completely God, and yet completely human, with a human body, mind, soul and will.

- Can we understand this? No; how can the created possibly understand the Creator.
  - How these two natures coexisted together we can only speculate... sort of as when we think of the edge of the universe: how can there not be an end, and yet, then we think, what is beyond it?
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- Why did God become Man and live among us?
- Because Man refused to obey Him whom he was bound and obligated to obey, and thus fell into sin—disobedience of God.
- And yet God loves us so much that He would not give us up without demonstrating how much He loves us. Perhaps then, He may have thought, they will turn back to Me...if I give them unmistakable proof of My love. If I teach them not only through a prophet, but come Myself and teach and guide them...not only by My Word, but by my example. I will become one of them.
- And to prove my love for them...I, as man, will give them all that a man is able to give—his very life. In that way they will know that, if I give all that Man can give...I will also give them all that God can rightly give.
- And yet...one of My greatest gifts to them I will not take away: the right to choose...the right to choose Me, or not. I will not force them; I will only show them.
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- This is why, dearly beloved of God, some people go to Heaven...and some do not. We make our choice here on earth that will last for all eternity.
- I cannot but think that God weeps when a soul is lost...but He has given us that wonderful and yet terrible gift of free will...by which we make our choice.
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- Thus Jesus comes to us today to offer us salvation.

- In the next 33 years He would live and grow and teach and guide...to finally complete His earthly mission on Good Friday and Easter Sunday.
- Behold, O Christian, God's tremendous love for you.

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- When a baby is born, there is rejoicing. Already there are dreams of what he or she might one day be.
  - Let us look upon the baby in the manger today...and we need not dream, but we know who He is...who He will become...what He we do...for it is already done.
  - We as children dream about being heroes and saving the world.
  - Here in the manger lies asleep the one who will truly do it...who will offer God's salvation to the world.
  - Jesus is born today for one purpose: that we might become saints.

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- So...like the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son, Our Father keeps vigil...longing to see us coming back down the road...coming home.
  - Strong or weak...rich or poor...beautiful or not...brilliant or challenged...whatever race or nation...it matters not.
  - Let us together kneel together at manger's side...and adore this little one who is king of all...
  - ...for "*The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together...and a little child shall lead them.*" (Isaiah 11:6)