

Dear Saints,

I pray that you have wonderful family time this Christmas season!

As I get older, I appreciate more and more the goodness of family. Also, as I get older, I see an increasing dismissal of God's good gifts of marriage and family. Sadly, this Christmas season will be spent divided between mom and dad by far too many kids. Many years ago, it was uncommon for kids not to celebrate Christmas in their own undivided home. Our country has sadly borne the fruit of the Enlightenment, Darwin's theory of evolution, no-fault divorce, and the sexual revolution. The Enlightenment made man the center of everything over God. Darwin's theory of evolution made random chance the god of our age. No-fault divorce destroyed the foundation of marriage and family. The sexual revolution made man in the image of a beast instead of God. We are truly reaping what we have sown. And it is sad. Our sadness echoes the sadness felt by the poet who sat and watched the destruction of Jerusalem because of the sins of the people:

"How lonely sits the city
that was full of people!
How like a widow has she become,
she who was great among the nations!
She who was a princess among the provinces
has become a slave!" (Lamentations 1:1)

Amidst this increasing sadness comes the incredible news that God has come in the flesh. Christmas is about the incarnation of our God who comes to save us from our enemies of sin, death, and the devil. He gives us this wonderful gift of salvation through faith alone apart from our works. What wonderful joy this gives us. "Tis the reason for the season" is trite but oh so true! We Christians have a reason for joy that can withstand any sadness. That does not mean there will not be occasion for sorrow during our Christmas celebrations. There is not a one of us whose life is not affected by sin. Sin always brings shame and sorrow. But the incarnation of our Lord and His free gift of grace brings a joy that covers all shame and sorrow.

When we live in this joy of our Lord, we act as a light to those around us in this dark world. Even if we have broken families due to our sin or another person's sin, we still have the joy of Christ which shines like a beacon to the world. We confess to the world another portion of Lamentations:

"The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases;
His mercies never come to an end;
They are new every morning;

great is Your faithfulness.
'The LORD is my portion,' says my soul,
'therefore I will hope in Him.'" (3:22-24)

Since we are assured of the steadfast love of our Lord, we have true joy at Christmas. We are enabled to enjoy our families no matter how big or small they are. I pray that your Christmas time is a time of much joy with your family.

In Christ,
Pastor Maggard