

ON THE PROPER OBSERVATION OF COMING FEAST OF CHRISTMAS!!

PRESENT DAY OBSERVATION of Christmas must surely be disenchanting with the secular banality that has encroached upon this centrally significant Christian Holy Day. The entire spirit of the occasion is devastated by the madness of gift exchanges. Christmas has become a merchants holiday - the buying orgy of these days profits only the merchants. The Birth of the God-Man is the most important event in human history, and certainly has nothing to do with buying or selling or gift giving. The latest attack on the atmosphere of Christmas is a football game on the very day itself!! This is surely the crowning achievement of the enemies of Christ.

Not only has the spirit of the occasion been ruined, but the things that promote the feast suffered greatly in past times - and present. Is it not a matter of law in certain places whether we can or cannot display the Christmas Scene in public places? Do you not remember when Christ was removed from the name itself and that the feast was referred to as "XMAS"? This is still in evidence from time to time. A strong movement to put Christ into Christmas has eased this problem. If any occasion has religious overtones, surely Christmas (along with Easter) should be the most religious day of the year. Christmas is a RELIGIOUS HOLYDAY, not a secular holiday. And why not?? Surely the REDEMPTIVE BIRTH of Jesus Chsirt, God-Man, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity measures up to all the qualities of a religious experience!

Rather than being the most depressing day of the entire year, Christmas should be a most charming and warm day. For a Christian, Christmas should be most central, and the preparation for it should be a spiritual one, not a commercial and totally materialistic one. To the degree that we make Christmas a materialistic experience, to that degree are we depressed when at last it arrives. We hurriedly put it away so that we can forget it. To the degree that we make Christmas an occasion for profoundly spiritual reflections, to that degree does it become very charming, warm, peaceful and rewarding. The strength of the religious character of the Day lingers on in our hearts, and we become loath to put it away or to forget it. But Christmas begins on Christmas Day - - NOT IN THE MIDDLE OF SEPTEMBER!

In our Churches, the penetrating symbolism of ADVENT prepares the soul and the mind for the occasion. THE FOUR WEEKS before the feast are dedicated to the instruction of the Faithful People. Each week concentrates on events of the greatest importance: events which precede the Birth of the long awaited Messiah.

Many families and churches have revived the old Austrian tradition of the Advent Wreath. This wreath consists of four candles mounted within a wreath or in a yule log appropriately decorated with evergreen and ribbon. One candle is lighted on the First Sunday of Advent and another on each succeeding Sunday. If the custom is carried out in the home, the head of the household (the Father of the Family) usually presides and lights the candle. He then reads the Gospel assigned for that particular Sunday. The entire Family as a unit, may join in the conclusion of this simple ceremony by singing an appropriate Christmas hymn. Such a custom is all to the good, and is an excellent preparation we should be making for this great Christmas Feast.

The Bulletins for the next few weeks shall have thoughts which should be of help to us all in our effort to better appreciate this glorious day.