

## Entering into the ‘Great Joy’ of Christmas

We have already entered into the Season of Advent and are preparing for Christmas. Advent isn't just about lighting candles of hope, love, peace and joy, and counting down the shopping days till Christmas. It is about reflecting upon the miracle of the Incarnation, that moment in time when the Word became flesh and lived among us. And this is indeed a joyful moment, and the good news for all of us.

Yes, my dear sisters and brothers, Christmas rings out “joy to the world”. All four weeks of Advent, we will be waiting and praying for the birth of our Lord Jesus. But let us ask ourselves, “What is so great about this baby Jesus, and why do we still continue to celebrate His birthday. Do we really need a Saviour?”

Yes, we do need a Saviour. Today, let us be joyful, because the Saviour is going to be born amongst us, who is God with us, who is God for us, who is God amongst us, who is God within us; a God who is going to bring joy and peace in our lives; who has the power to melt hearts of stone, to break open closed minds, to enlighten every darkness, to turn sinners into saints. Let Him enter our lives and let His birth bring joy in every human heart and the human community this Christmas.

Let us reflect upon how do I personally enter into this “great joy” of Christmas? How do I make this joy my own? This is an important question for us because, although God has declared joy to the whole world, there are still many among us who do not share in this joy, many among us who do not know how to experience this joy and share it with others. We still need to do something, make a little effort, before we can personally experience this joy in our lives, in our families, and in our world.

How do we do that? Let us look at the word **JOY**. It is made up of three letters: first J, then O, and lastly Y. J stands for Jesus, O for Others, and Y for You. J-O-Y therefore is: **Jesus, Others, before You.**

**J stands for ‘JESUS’** – To know joy in our lives, we need to place Jesus first in everything. One day, during Christmas time, a man asked a young woman the meaning of Christmas. Laughing, the young woman responded, “I don't know. Is that the day Jesus died?” There

was some truth in her answer. If we continue celebrating Christmas without opening our hearts to Jesus, then we have lost the real meaning of Christmas. Jesus is the reason for the season. Someone has rightly said, “Christmas is the season of the heart, and Jesus is the heart of it all.”

**O stands for ‘OTHERS’** – We must be other-oriented, rather than self-oriented. Then only we can share our joy with others. God is other-oriented who always thinks good about us. The Saints were always other-oriented. Take a classic example – Alexander Graham Bell (Edinburgh, Scotland) who invented the first working telephone. But he could never speak to his mother and wife on a telephone, because both of them were deaf. Alexander Graham Bell always thought of others; although his mother and wife were deaf, that did not stop him from inventing the telephone. It does not matter if we or our families do not benefit from our good work. We must try to please others before trying to please ourselves. That is the recipe for joy.

And the last letter **Y stands for ‘YOU’** – You and I are instruments of the joy of Christmas; we need to experience this joy and share it with others. We need to give each other something of ourselves, some of our time. So let us share this gift of joy not only with those who will give to us in return, but also with those who receive from no one.

We receive and we give gifts. But the true joy that Christmas brings is not the joy that material things can give. It is the inner joy of belonging to Jesus and sharing. So today, let us resolve to celebrate this JOY by always placing Jesus and others before ourselves, and then the joy of Christmas will always be ours.

**Questions for personal reflection:**

1. How am I going to prepare myself to welcome Jesus in my heart?
2. How can I enter into the ‘Great Joy’ of Christmas?
3. Have I tried to celebrate the JOY of Christmas by always placing Jesus and others before me?

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