

CHRISTMAS, AND THE HOLIDAYS – YOU ARE MY CHRISTMAS GIFT!

Dear St. Cyprian's Church,

We are at the Advent of bringing the year 2023 to a close, and it is the time of year when most people are preparing for or are preoccupied with Christmas and the holidays. Yet so much has changed. Even our lives, our relationships, our practices, our rituals, our norms, and our anticipations are different due to the continued controlled but prevalent Covid 19 and other cold and flu strains. I meditated earlier this week my anticipated excitement with my wife Valda, and I would have spent with our late son, Robin. Some at St. Cyprian's Church are feeling loss – of loved ones, and physical fellowship. My daily prayers are saturated with an end to the dreaded loss of life in the Middle East and Ukraine, so that some of you, already fragile due to ageism and aches and pains are further subjected to this tribulation. We are not alone, for holidays are often difficult for people who have experienced the death of a loved one. The sounds, sights and smells of the holiday season may trigger feelings of sadness, loss, emptiness, and anxiety. Traditionally being a time of family togetherness, sharing and thanksgiving, this season may bring feelings of loss different from what you experience in your daily routine.

In Peru, you can't drive your car on Christmas. In Lebanon, you can go to a nightclub, but you can't dance. In South Africa, roadblocks instead of beach parties will mark this year's festive season. Countries around the world are trying to find the right formulas to keep their people safe for Christmas, especially as crime and violence prompt renewed travel bans and fuel resurgent infections, hospitalizations, and deaths at the end of a hopeful year.

Friends, please be gentle with yourself. The combination of a holiday and a loss naturally results in looking inward and thinking about where you have been and where you are. Be gentle with yourself as you think about the true meaning of the holidays. Find things around you that you are thankful for, even if they are small things. Accept the ups and downs you may experience. If you feel sadness, feel sadness. If you feel joy, feel joy. Keep taking deep breaths and take each moment as it comes.

Memories were made in love, and memories are what keep you connected to your loved one during the holiday season. As you share memories, keep in mind that memories can bring feelings of both happiness and sadness. Allow yourself to feel your feelings. The Incarnation imprints on us an attitude toward relationships. Jesus says, I want fellowship with you. The test that you know what Christmas is about is that you become more desirous of intimate personal relationships with other people and better at getting them, because the Incarnation is the secret of good personal relationships.

Christmas makes you free to be emotional or happy, and I have experienced that freedom. With you. I want us to be united in a community. I want us to be united in belief.

There are so many of you I would like to personally thank for all you are doing for St. Cyprian's Church and our community. I believe that, the Lord, who sees what you do in secret, will reward you. I felt twinges of excitement as I experienced our young families whose children partook in our St. Nicholas service on Sunday. Thank you, children and parents; thank you, Choir; thank you Altar Guild; thank you, ushers, vestry, flower, church and ground maintenance, hospitality group.. Thank you, Josie, for holding the fort before my acceptance as your Interim priest, and to Justin and his team, Dr. Edward and Janeal, Esq. for our live screening, website, and Facebook. Thank you for the wedding, birthday, Christmas cards, gifts, and wishes my wife Valda and I have received from you. Stay safe, stay healthy, stay happy, and have a Blessed, Joyful Christmas, and New Year.

Much love,

Noble – Interim Rector