



Birthday Presents for Jesus?

Dear Friend,

As Christmas approaches I'd again like to share with you a simple story I came across some years ago called "Mary's Dream":

Mary's Dream

"I had a dream, Joseph. I don't understand it, but I think it was about a birthday celebration for our son.

The people in my dream had been preparing for about six weeks. They had decorated the house and bought new clothes. They'd gone shopping many times and bought many elaborate gifts.

It was peculiar, though, because the presents weren't for our son. They wrapped them in beautiful paper and stacked them under a tree. Yes, a tree, Joseph, right inside their homes! They'd decorated the tree with sparkling ornaments. There was a figure like an angel on the top of the tree.

Everyone was laughing and happy. They gave the gifts to each other Joseph, not to our son. I don't think they even knew him. They never mentioned his name.

I had the strangest feeling that, if our Jesus had gone to this celebration, he would have been intruding. How sad for someone not to be wanted at his own birthday party! I'm glad it was only a dream. How terrible, Joseph, if it had been real!"

(Author Unknown)

As you may recall, I shared the story with my parishioners at the time and some were so moved by it that they resolved to compile a birthday "Presents for Jesus" Christmas list for themselves and to share with others. My hope and theirs is that you will read the list of suggestions that follow and give one or more of the suggested presents to Jesus this Christmas along with your other gifts. Or you may think of another present that He would enjoy. I'm sure that if you chose any one of the presents listed, or gave something similar, Jesus would be delighted. And I'm also sure, given the delight Jesus enjoys in receiving His birthday gifts, Mary and Joseph would also smile with satisfaction knowing her dream was in fact unreal.

God Bless

Father John Archbold OMI

Suggested "Presents for Jesus"

Gifts

1. Give a Christian book as a Christmas gift. (e.g. Teresa of Avila "Interior Castle").
2. Gift your spouse a weekend retreat at the Redemptorist or New Norcia monastery.
3. Help families overcome poverty via the Caritas Christmas appeal www.caritas.org.au/donate
4. Make a Christmas donation to St Vincent DePaul.
5. Make a donation to Life Link sufficient to cause you to go without something you'd like.

Prayers and Reflections

6. Ask Jesus and your favourite Saint to help us to be signs for God so that others can see His compassion, His love, His peace and joy, through us, through our daily Christian living.
7. Perhaps it is time to show your appreciation to your Guardian Angel.
8. An old Chinese proverb says, 'Dig the well before you are thirsty'. Advent is a time of preparation. There is no better way to prepare than through the Sacrament of Reconciliation.
9. Search 'Geoffrey Plant youtube' for a series of thoughtful Homilies from the Diocese of Sydney.
10. Pray that the real story of Christmas is not lost through commercialisation.

Personal

11. If you walk to Mass, resolve to say a decade or more of the rosary as you walk.
12. Resolve to buy "Fair Trade" products.
13. Start a "gratitude journal" and write down three things that went well for you during the day and thank the Lord for all the good things in your life.
14. Sign up to Cathnews a free service from the Australian Bishops Conference to keep abreast of issues affecting Catholics in Australia. www.cathnews.com.au
15. Commit to making a retreat before next Christmas.

Outreach

16. Invite an infrequent church-going friend or family member to join you for a Christmas mass.
17. Pray for all those preparing to enter the Church, particularly those in the RCIA program.
18. Put Christmas cards in the letterboxes of unknown neighbours complimenting them on a new paint job on their house, a new garden bed, an amazing bloom, an abundant crop etc.

Promises and Commitments

19. Resolve each day to profess, give witness to, or celebrate your faith in some way.
20. If your Lenten promise has lapsed or been forgotten, renew it for the month of January.
21. Resolve to imitate Jesus and react as He would when you find yourself having to make choices or decisions, particularly those that involve or impact others.
22. If your "Present to Jesus" is by way of a promise or commitment, write it in a Christmas card addressed "To Jesus from *your name*" and put it under the Christmas tree to remind all at gift opening time of the true meaning of Christmas. Afterwards, put the card somewhere where you will see it each day to remind you of what you resolved to do.
23. Resolve to introduce yourself to someone new after Mass or at a Parish Morning tea or similar function?

Donations

24. Make a donation to the parish, church or a diocesan building or restoration funds.
25. Have you tools or materials you could offer to the local "Men's Shed"? www.freomenshed.org.au
26. Your local Vinnies store would appreciate those no longer needed clothes.
27. Could you suggest someone who owes you money donate that amount to a Church charity as full loan repayment?

Time and Talents

28. Mow a lawn (or do something else) for a neighbour who may not be able to do it themselves.
29. Resolve to volunteer for some ministry in the parish and discover that it's a present for you as well as Jesus.
30. Become a volunteer at a Catholic Hospital or Nursing Home.
31. Become a New Norcia Volunteer.
32. Organise a fund raiser for a young person's visit to World Youth Day.

Family

33. Resolve as a family to go to a Christmas mass together.
34. As a "Family Gift" make a donation to the parish to cover the yearly or monthly cost of some small item of church expenditure (e.g. altar candles, altar wine, communion hosts, a month's electricity bill, printing cost of one week's "Saving Word" or one month's "Patrician").
35. "The family that prays together stays together." Now might be the time to renew the practice of grace before meals.
36. There's a saying that "world peace starts at the family dinner table", so why not commit as family to contribute to world peace.

Young Children

If you have young children or grandchildren you might:

37. Read a short version of the true Christmas story before opening the Christmas presents.
38. Help introduce this Mary's Dream campaign, suitably modified for the age group, into your Catholic primary or high school.
39. Help them make their own nativity related Christmas cards.

Teenagers and young people

40. Have the Youth Group volunteer, as a group, to assist with a parish "busy bee".
41. Invite someone outside your circle of friends to join your group in a social or sporting activity.
42. Off to Uni? Join a Christian Fellowship club at Uni. If there isn't one, then why not start one?
43. Can you commit to being part of World Youth Day in Lisbon 2023?

Parish Initiatives

44. Produce a Catholic Businesses Directory for retail, trade or professional services being owned or run by Catholics in the suburbs serviced by the parish or in the near vicinity.
45. Establish a "lost and found" group whose role in the parish is to identify and tactfully check on the well-being of regular parishioners who don't attend mass for a number of weeks with an "Are you OK?" contact call or visit.
46. Publish a directory of parish lay ministries, activities, or social groups and invite folk to participate.
47. Could the parish learn from or contribute to the workings of other parishes? See: www.buildingstrongerparishes.catholic.org.au
48. Look for ways to include non-frequent Mass attendees in parish functions and activities.
49. Widen the roster system to encompass the many support roles members of the congregation can play at Mass as a way of encouraging more people to participate.

Other

50. Can you think of other "presents" along these lines for Jesus as you see Him in your prayer life?



BASILICA OF ST PATRICK **Christmas & New Year Timetable**

Wednesday 22 December

11am Adoration
12noon Angelus and Mass
7pm 2nd Rite of Reconciliation

Friday 24 December—Christmas Eve

11am Adoration
12noon Angelus and Mass
Carols at 5.30pm prior to the 6pm Children's Mass
Carols at 8pm prior to the 8.30pm Mass
Carols at 11.30pm prior to the Midnight Mass
St Anne's Church, North Fremantle: Carols at 6.15pm prior to 6.30pm Mass

Saturday 25 December - Christmas Day

Basilica Masses: 8am, 9.30am (Italian) and 11am
St Anne's Church, North Fremantle Mass: 8.15am
6pm Vigil Mass for the Holy Family

Sunday 26 December

Basilica Masses: 8am, 9.30am (Italian), 11am and 5pm
St Anne's Church, North Fremantle Mass: 8.15am

Friday 31 December - New Year's Eve

11am Adoration
12noon Angelus and Mass
6pm New Year's Eve Mass

Saturday 1 January, 2022 - New Year's Day

NO LONGER A HOLY DAY OF OBLIGATION
9.30am, 10.30am, 11am and 4.30pm Reconciliation in English
11am Adoration
12noon Angelus and Mass
6pm Vigil Mass