

**December 2009**

## **“Unplug the Christmas Tree”**

Christmas? For many families, it’s a rushed time of gift-giving and family visitations. In a word, “Humbug!” But it doesn’t have to be that way.

As a young pastor I got involved in offering parish workshops based on a book entitled: “Unplug the Christmas Tree: A Complete Guide to Putting Joy and Love Back into Christmas.” Admittedly secular in presentation, the book did offer some insights and suggestions in making Christmas less stressful and more meaningful.

Many of us long for a simpler, less commercial Christmas.

Well, that’s how it used to be!

Although Tiny Tim (think Charles Dickens’ *Christmas Carol*) may have found some small gifts in his Christmas stocking that morning, it is unlikely that in the 1800s the older children or Mr. and Mrs. Cratchit received anything. Gifts were almost always reserved for the very young. With little emphasis on gift-giving, Christmas preparations were less elaborate. No weeks of shopping for gifts, wrapping them, standing in line to mail them, then worrying whether you bought the right thing after all!

Imagine if you will another world where Christmas music in the shopping malls doesn’t start already in July, and doesn’t end the day after Boxing Day.

Don’t get me wrong. I’m not against Christmas gift-giving. I was once a child myself. And I appreciate that many families and businesses make it or break it at this time of the year. However, if the focus of Christmas becomes solely gift-giving, then we’ve forgotten altogether the real meaning of Christmas; we’ve taken “Christ” out of “Christmas.”

Put it another way: We Christians give gifts at Christmas in humble imitation of the gift that God gave us – Jesus, his only son; Emmanuel, God with us!

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3: 16). At Christmas, we receive the gift of being members of God’s family. We receive the gift of a loving and caring Father. We receive the gift of salvation and of eternal life. And because we have received, we can then offer others this same gift.

So this Christmas let us find ways to Unplug the Christmas Tree by simplifying our Christmas preparations, taking extra time off from work, going to Church, and spending more time at home with family.

May the Nativity of Our Lord bring you and your family peace, joy and hope!  
Christ is Born! Let us Glorify Him!

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