



Christmas 1 – Isaiah 61: 10-62:3

“Christmas Wrap”

Greetings and Blessings to you and your families on this first Sunday of Christmas Tide - known in liturgical circles as Christmas 1, and in the Song 12 Days of Christmas, this is the repetitive and irritating day of the (sung) “5 Gold Rings...!”

Christmas 1 also has the sketchy reputation in liturgical circles as being the least attended Sunday of any during the entire Liturgical year. And so this Sunday is typically the time when most Bishops, Rectors and Vicars delegate their

homiletic responsibilities, their "sermonizing" if you will to Priest Associates, staff members, retired clergy, interns, sextons, organists, groundskeepers or just about anybody with a bible and a voice. However, as you see today, we are all here strong and together... once again defying the Church's "normal" and the Church's expected "trends."

I absolutely love Christmas Tide... the 12 Days of Christmas the shortest, most condensed and yet, in my view, one of the most joyful of the "Liturgical Seasons." Christmas officially extends from Christmas Day until the celebration of The Epiphany of Jesus on January 5<sup>th</sup>, but so far I have seen quite a few households that appear to be "Christmas-ed out." Christmas lights are coming down all over town; inflatable Frosty, Reindeer, Santa and even a few mangers lie

defeated, deflated and flat, ready for the annual trip back into the tub labeled, "Christmas Decorations". Our blue recycling bins are full of cardboard tubes, and boxes and cartons of all types... Christmas is a cardboard recycler's dream. And yes, the Christmas Wrap... miles and acre-feet of all manner of Christmas wrap... now torn, shredded... a holiday afterthought... a symbol perhaps for us... but of what? And unfortunately, I can see why some are ready to be done with "small-c" Christmas. After all it began right after Halloween, barely giving the Thanksgiving Turkey any breathing room at all.

You have all journeyed mightily with us through Advent as we sought to "Birth The Divineness Within Us," how we became Surrogates for the Sacred nurturing and bringing forth the Divine

Spark that resides within us all. We were mentored in Advent by the examples of Mary's strength and Joseph's faithfulness and trust. We shared Christmas Eve with the Blessed Shepherds where we learned of The Creator's "sign" for us all. That Jesus did not only come for the rich and powerful and the smart and the beautiful ones... The Christmas Eve Gospel screamed, "and this will be a sign for you." The first to know about the birth of the Blessed One were the least, lowest and occupants of the lowest rung of Jewish society... the Shepherds. And in this sign Jesus' young lungs shouted... I came for you... all of you.

And so if Advent is about Mary and Joseph and Christmas Eve is about the Shepherds... what about this 12 Days of Christmas? Who is our

featured character and who has center stage for these next 12 days? Why it is none other than the Christ Child, Jesus himself. In all his 5-day old glory. So what do we do now with this amazing boy just birthed? We have been waiting and hoping, doing the work and now suddenly He is among us... named Emmanuel... God is with us! What now?

This Christmas I was blessed to be gifted in many and amazing ways. Each and every present was unique and special in its own way. But my absolute favorite of all my gifts this Christmas was my new brown Pendleton sweater. It is a classic button front cardigan style complete with leather buttons and the style has been immortalized by Fred Rogers, Ward Cleaver, Ozzie Nelson and countless English and Philosophy professors throughout academia. I just put on the darn thing

and it seems my IQ goes up 20 points or so almost immediately. While I have never smoked, as I button the leather buttons, I have this strange urge to light up my non-existent briar pipe with some classic aromatic Captain Black cavendish tobacco; sit in my leather chair and discuss Voltaire or perhaps Dilbert. Yes, indeed my brown Pendleton button up sweater just does something magic when I put it on... it wraps me, nestles me, envelopes me, makes me feel warm and safe and dry and smart and eloquent... it just makes me feel good. When I put the sweater on for the first time, Mona who gifted it to me, remarked, "It looks good on you Babe. It just suits you."

It just suits you, yes... I believe it does, it just suits me. Makes me feel well, like I said....makes me feel good!

And so back to the Christmas Wrap now littering our living room floors and our recycling bins. What is the message there? Well, we had something interesting happen this Christmas morning as the opened pile of presents grew and each of us in turn discarded our torn and spent Christmas wrap into a giant pile on the floor. Somebody remarked, Hey where's Orlando, our newest 9-month-old grandson. Hmm... I hadn't seen him for a bit as we all were preoccupied with our openings and "ah-ings". And then from deep in the pile of discarded Christmas wrap we saw a wiggle, then another and finally a hand and foot emerge as our Blessed Grandson emerged from the pile.

Blessed Ones, the lesson is this... don't be too quick to discard the joys and feelings of

Christmas. In these 12 blessed days, we begin to understand how to wrap ourselves, our lives, our heart and our souls with the blessing that is the Christ Child. Don't be too quick to toss the wrapping... for that is exactly what this newly birthed Sacred Thing is all about. Wrapping us with his love... as we wrap him, as the Gospeler says "in strips of cloth," this blessed little one wraps us in our shared divinity and perhaps for the first time in a long time, we feel warm and safe, dry and fed and, yes, loved. For these 12 days are all about learning how to wrap ourselves in the joy and message of the Child.

And when we try on the wrapping of the Christ Child, just like my new sweater... it just makes us feel good. And yes Blessed Ones, it just suits you. Yes it does... Yes, I believe it does.



Blessings to you and yours this Christmastide...

Amen