

Mary, Merry Christmas

A Lord's Flock General Assembly Topic
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For many of us, the season of giving means reciprocity – giving and expecting gifts in return. However, God's gift was freely given without expecting anything – He gave His only begotten Son to be our Redeemer (Luke 2:7). Sadly, there has been a concerted effort to remove God's influence from this season ("Merry Christmas has been replaced with "Happy Holidays"). Thus, we need to recapture the good news - there is NO Christmas without Christ. We need to recapture the marvel and wonder of the infant Child coming to the world, the true gift to all of us.

1. Who are the main characters during the birth of Jesus?

1.1. Mother Mary was visited by angel Gabriel and was *highly favored*, "the Lord is with you" (Luke 1:26-28). Mary was troubled because her world would change dramatically. But, the angel reassured her "do not be afraid." Similarly, today, many of us have troubled hearts and we find it impossible to believe that we are favored, "I chose you" (John 15:16). Let us remember - God has us in His hands; our futures are secure (Eph 1:3).

1.2. St. Joseph is the patron saint of husbands. When he woke up, he did what the angel commanded him, and treated Jesus as his son (Mt. 1:22-23). He did not mind all the issues that faced him. He showed his selflessness and obedience.

1.3. The Shepherds were the first guests of our Lord – a filthy, smelly bunch who were religious misfits. The shepherds represent all of us. Sin makes us all misfits and separates us from God. The Savior came to save the misfits. The coming of Christ is an invitation to come home (Lk. 2:10-14).

2. Why was Mother Mary M.E.R.R.Y.?

2.1.1. Mary recognized the greatness of God. She was overwhelmed, but she submitted. "...may Your will be done (Lk. 1:38). Being favored by God is a

difficult gift to receive. It calls for courage, strength and great faith to face what God wants us to accomplish.

2.1.2. EXPECT great rewards and miracles. Let us ask the Lord to give us the grace to let God use us. If God sees that there are flaws that need to be removed, He will do so through our trials until we start to obey.

2.1.3. RECOGNIZE the greatness of God. The baby leaped in Elizabeth's womb, and she was filled with the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:41-45). When we are anointed, something also happens to the people close to us. They experience the presence of God in us and through us.

2.1.4. REJOICE. Mary's soul rejoiced in God - "my soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices (Lk. 1:46). When we have problems, let us rejoice. We praise Him to acknowledge His goodness.

2.1.5. MAGNIFY. From the word "maga luno" – to make larger, to make great with words. Mary's singing praised the character of God – almighty and holy (Ps. 32:11). When we begin praising God, we magnify Him and minimize our troubles (Heb 13:15).

Conclusion: This advent season, remember the Baby who came, and anticipate His coming again. On His birthday, let us all place ourselves under the tree. Let us pray to be reconciled, forget about the past, forgive and move forward. The Lord has favored us and we welcome what He wants us to do. Let us be like -

- Mary who says "let it be done to us according to His word."
- Joseph who is selfless and obedient.
- Elizabeth whose heart was filled with joy.
- Shepherds who go out and look for the misfits.

Reflection:

1. This advent, what gift will you offer to Jesus?
2. How will you search for misfits to bring home to our Lord?

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