

First Sunday After Christmas - New Years Day, January 1, 2006, Liturgical Year "B"

**St. Bartholomew's Church in the Town of Tonawanda, N.Y**

The Rev. Fr. John E. Commins, Curate

Scripture: Matthew 2: 13 - 15, 19 - 23

***"Life Without Jesus"***

**Life without Jesus?**

In the first part of his Christmas Eve sermon – Father Ward was pretty clear about how our society is trying to de-Christianize Christmas. We can say Happy Holidays, Happy Hanukkah or Happy Kwanzaa, etc. But don't say "Merry Christmas!" Despite the origin of Christmas from both a religious or a secular viewpoint, **Jesus Christ was born! Thank God for that!**

As I was enjoying our first Christmas in Western New York, I got to thinking about one of my favorite Christmas movies – which seemed to be one of the very few that were shown this year. The classic – "It's a Wonderful Life" takes us through the life of George Bailey – played by Jimmy Stewart. At the end of his rope – through no fault of his own – he tries to take his own life – only to be rescued by the angel Clarence, and he is given a chance to see what the world would be like if he had never been born.

I started to wonder what the world would be like if Jesus had not come. What would the world be like if Jesus had never been born as Scripture so accurately states and to which historians attest?

**1. A SECULAR VIEW - THE WINTER SEASON CELEBRATION:**

Regardless of your background or where you come from, just about everybody "gets in" on the secular Christmas celebration. We now have winter or Holiday concerts and winter or Holiday breaks in schools. Just this week I heard a Jewish man proclaim on TV that "Christmas is a time for kids! We all ought to enjoy it." Here was someone who clearly was not a Christian but he got into the celebration of Christmas. A lot of people get in on this. But think about it: Even if you look at it from a secular point of view, what if Jesus had not been born?

**THERE WOULD BE:**

**NO SALES** – We would not have early Christmas, pre-Christmas, or after-Christmas sales! The malls would be empty. The news reports tell us that retailers make the most money they'll make all year during the Christmas season.

**NO SERVICE** – It is remarkable that some people will go out of their way at Christmas time to be of service in the community. They'll deliver toys to children in the hospital or take gifts to shut-ins or nursing homes. They send Christmas cards to shut ins, help out in the "Toys for Tots" drives, etc. There would no Salvation Army – and no one for Target to tell to move their red kettles. If Jesus had not been born, there wouldn't be any one doing marvelous service like this.

**NO EBINEEZER SCROOGE** – We would have no sniveling bad guy screaming "Bah Humbug" who changes his ways.

**NO SEASON of Good Will** – Not on the roads of course, but some people do seem to "act" extra nice to one another during Christmas time.

**NO SONGS** like "We Wish You A Merry Christmas," "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year," "I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas", "The Christmas Song - Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire," "The Chipmunks Song," or "I'll Be Home For Christmas, If Only in My Dreams" etc. **"We Wish You**

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**a Merry Saturnalia" just doesn't cut it, does it?**

**NO SCENES OF THE MANGER:** Mary, Joseph, the shepherd, the three wise men. Just think how terrible that would be! Think about it – the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) would have absolutely nothing to complain about this time of year – nothing to fight to remove from public property!

**NO STORY OF CHRISTMAS!** There would be no story to tell if Jesus had not come to this earth.

## 2. **THE SCRIPTURAL VIEW:**

As far as the story in the Bible is concerned, **if Jesus had not been born, there would be:**

**NO SPECIAL FORERUNNER** named John the Baptist who would announce to the world: "*prepare ye the way of the Lord,*" "*repent.*"

**NO SHEPHERDS** – who lefts their flocks and went to visit the Christ-child that wonderful night.

**NO STAR** – to shine in the night and guide those travelers to the manger in Bethlehem.

**NO SEARCHING MAGI** – who left their homes on a long and difficult journey to pay homage to the newborn King.

**NO SPECIAL GIFTS:** – of gold, frankincense, and myrrh

**NO SAYINGS BY THE ANGELS:** – "*Do Not Be Afraid*" or "*Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, goodwill toward men.*" The words "*Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt*" would never have been heard.

**NO THREAT** to the kingship of Herod.

## 3. **THE SON'S VIEWPOINT**

If Jesus had not been born of the Virgin Mary, **think about this – there would be:**

**NO SERVANT BIRTH** – Jesus would not have had to leave the glory of Heaven and take on human flesh and all of its pain.

**NO SPITTING** upon him by His enemies.

**NO KISS** of betrayal.

**NO SCOURGING**

**NO AGONY** in the Garden.

**NO REED SCEPTRE** that was handed to Him in mockery of His claim to be the King of Kings and Lord of lords.

**NO CROWN OF THORNS** or for that matter - no lots cast for His garments.

**NO SUFFERING OF JESUS** - when He "*For our sake ... was made to be sin who knew no sin.*"

**NO SPEAR** – in His side from which blood and water came forth.

**NO HOLY SEPULCHRE** – in which to be buried for only 3 days and now is still empty.

## 4. **THE SPIRITUAL VIEWPOINT:** From a Spiritual point of view – **there would be:**

**NO SENSE** to the OT Prophets and the prophecies of the coming Messiah of Israel.

**NO SINGING** of songs like "Silent Night," "Away in a Manger," "While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night," "It Came Upon A Midnight Clear," no "Joy to The World." There would be no

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"Angels We Have Heard on High" nor "We Three Kings," etc. Of course, that also means there would be no "Just as I Am" or "Amazing Grace" or "How Great Thou Art" or "O, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing my great Redeemer's praise. There would be nothing to sing about, folks! Why?

**NO SIN OFFERING** – Nothing to pay the debt of sin that we owe.

#### **5. THE SAINTS and SINNERS' VIEWPOINT**

I started to make two separate points of these two, but then I got to thinking, **if Jesus had not been born, there wouldn't be any saints, only sinners!!** What if Jesus had not been born and how does that affect the sinner? Well, of course, first of all, **there would be...**

**NO SAINTS** - there would be no saints!

**NO SUNDAY SERVICES** – in which you can come together for fellowship and for instruction in the Word. Worship: Who or what would we worship? I shudder to even think about it.

**NO SCRIPTURE** to comfort, encourage, correct and challenge us.

**NO SERENITY** – or peace in the midst of trouble.

**NO SHELTER** in the time of storm.

**NO SAFETY** -

**NO SECURITY** –

**NO SUBSTITUTE** – to stand in my place and pay the price for my sin.

**NO SAVIOR** –

**NO HOLY SPIRIT** to live inside me and teach me and guide me and comfort me.

**NO SHOUTING** or rejoicing in heaven when a sinner gets saved.

**NO SALVATION** – which means there would be No Heralds, No Healing, No Heaven and Absolutely No Hope.

When you stop and *really* think about it – **the painful truth** is - that we are surrounded every day with people who are living this reality.

- People who don't know Jesus –
- who don't know of His birth, death and Resurrection;
- people who have none of the safety and security of knowing Jesus and having a right relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- People who we drive alongside on the roadways of Western New York,
- people on line at the grocery store,
- people in the next cubicle at work or school.

**The picture that I just painted - of a life without Jesus – is just what they have: *LIFE WITHOUT JESUS.***

But, my beloved Brothers and Sisters, **the Good News is: Jesus DID come to this earth!** The undeniable, indisputable truth is that:

**He IS** the fulfillment of every OT prophecy.

**He WAS** born of a virgin in Bethlehem.

**He WAS** wrapped in swaddling clothes. Heavenly angels announced His birth. Shepherds visited him.

**He DID** live a perfect life.

**He TOUCHED** people and healed them.

**He RAISED** people from the dead.

**He DID** walk on water.

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**He HAS** fed the multitudes.

**He DID** die on the cross for our sins.

**He HAS** risen from the dead.

**He HAS** paid *OUR* sin debt.

**He IS** seated at the right hand of the Father.

**He IS NOW** making intercession for you and me.

**He LISTENS** to the cry of your heart.

**He WANTS** you to be able to look Him in the face and accept Him.

**He WANTS** you to be quiet and listen for Him to speak to you.

**He LOVES** you with an everlasting love.

**He WANTS** to forgive your sin.

**He LONGS** to be your Savior.

**He LONGS** to be Savior for the whole world – and that is why Jesus told all of his disciples – before going to be with the Father – these most powerful and convicting words: ***“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*** (Matthew 28:19-20)

Jesus doesn't ask us, but instead He tells us to:

- **GO** –
- **MAKE DISCIPLES** –
- **BAPTIZE** –
- **TEACH THEM TO OBEY** – and
- **TO REMEMBER** – **we are never without Him.**

Jesus wants us to respond to His Commission for us – to take action – to make sure that everyone knows about Him – EVERYONE! This Great Commission is every much as serious as His words to “Do this in Remembrance of Me.” Do you hear what I am saying? Let me put it as plain as I can – Jesus does not want people to live “Life Without Jesus” but instead wants everyone to hear and respond to His story. You, my brothers and sisters, are His hands and His feet – it is up to you to spread the Word – to get the message **to ears that have either not heard – or have refused to hear** that Jesus is Lord, Messiah, Savior, Redeemer, King, and Son of the Living God. **You can make the difference** – in someone living “Life without Jesus” or living Eternal Life with Jesus. **The choice to respond is yours** – and I pray that you accept His Commissioning today.