

2 – 1-10-21      Christmas is not over!

December 25 has come and gone. Christmas is longed for all year. It's anticipated and prepared for. And, even with pandemic restrictions we found ways to celebrate with family and friends. The celebration of Christmas brings peace and joy. But then December 25 comes and goes.

Good tidings and good cheer were present for a short time during Advent and on Christmas Day, but now a new year has begun and we have to get back to normal, right? (the NEW normal)

Wrong! Though the day of December 25 has come and gone, Christmas is not meant to be over. Christmas is just the beginning of what we are required to do all year round.

The Christmas Spirit is Christ living in us all year long. With His Incarnation, Christmas has become "the normal." Emmanuel, God-is-with-us, did not come for a few short weeks and then disappeared until a later appearance. No, Emmanuel, God-is-with-us, means God is never going away. He is present. He is near. And we are to continue to celebrate His birth and *presence* among us.

Here are some ways to keep the Christmas Spirit alive every day of the year:

**Focus on what you have.** Christmas time often reminds us of all that we have to be thankful for: our friends, family, and the collective joy many of us experience at this time of year. If we keep that feeling of appreciation with us all year long, the spirit of Christmas will live on in our daily lives.

**Know what really matters.** At Christmas most of us prioritize matters, like spending time with those we love and celebrating a season that means something to us. The silver lining of the pandemic is that more families have more time to spend with one another. During the New Year, keep as priority spending time with your family. Give attention and kindness to those around you every day.

**Look for the good.** Christmas is a time for noticing special things—the little traditions, the pretty, glittery decorations, the excitement of children. The Christmas season brings out a sense of childlike wonder. Embrace that wonderment by looking for the good in all people and all situations.

**Practice charity.** Generosity to strangers and giving to the unfortunate is part of Christmas time. As the Christmas Spirit deepens in our hearts, it's easier to drop our change into the Salvation Army bucket, or give a donation to the needy. Keep this spirit of giving throughout the New Year. Remember, God will never be out done in generosity.

**Read the Gospels.** We are familiar with the story of Christ's birth from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. The angels announced "good news" to all—a Savior is born. The good news is heightened and made greater when we read, reflect, and pray on the entire Gospel, contained in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Come to see how Jesus is the Good News.

Many of your decoration may be been packed away already. But don't pack away your Christmas Spirit, for Christmas is not over! We are to live it every day of 2021.