

TONIGHT IS CHRISTMAS!

From: Stories, Parables and Fables of life of P. Ribes, s.j.

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Intent of the Story

To revitalize e our Religious Celebrations.

To relive the mystery of Christmas, the Son of God, born in a stable.

Many of our religious celebrations lost their religious significance.

They have become only an occasion of, not the real cause of celebration.

THE STORY

The town was in a festive mood. Decorations, lights, music, carol singing, people strolling in the streets. Trendy shops were loaded with presentation items, crowds flocking to buy expensive luxury gifts for friends and dear ones. Homes were lit, sweets prepared, clothes displayed, Christmas cards strung together on the walls

The atmosphere was saturated with merriment and song. Little kids waiting for Santa Claus to arrive. By evening time revelers filled the streets, music and dancing was going on full swing in five star hotels and costly restaurants

Then, Jesus got a queer idea. He said. "Let me go back to the earth and see what that din and merry making is all about?" As he stepped in one of the posh areas of the city, he asked some youngsters who were rushing to a Christmas ball: "What's going here on today in the city? What's all the rush and clatter?"

With surprise in their faces, the youngsters replied: "You a Christian and you do not know that tonight is Christmas!?" Jesus asked again: "Christmas? What's that? Please tell me!" Hurriedly, they said: "On Christmas night, Jesus was born! Yes, born in a stable and placed on a manger"

"Why on a manger" asked Jesus. They said: "Because his Parents were too poor to afford to spend one night in a cheap hotel; nay, not even in an inn". Then, without a second thought, our youngsters rushed to a five star hotel for a Christmas ball where they had to pay Rs.4000/- per couple.

On the way to the posh hotel, our youngsters could see destitute children sleeping on the hard pavements of the roads, hungry and shivering with cold.

They were greatly surprised, not to say shocked at discovering on the faces of those poor children clearly reflected the countenance of the man who asked them: **'Christmas? What's that? Please tell me?'**

RELEVANT QUESTIONS FOR US CHRISTIANS

1. Is Jesus still today born in a manger or even in worse conditions? How is it portrayed in the story?
2. Are we aware of the “pagan and unchristian” ways with which we celebrate Christmas?
3. Would you agree to the saying that “We have thrown Christ out of Christmas?” How?
4. Do all the waste, show and noise of our Christmas Celebrations make any sense in the context of the Gospel teachings? Why?
5. Actually speaking what would be more appropriate to say to others on the occasion of Christmas: Have a “**Merry**” Christmas “or rather have a “**Happy**” Christmas? Why?
6. Would Jesus feel at home were he to attend our five star hotels and other posh Christmas balls and celebrations? What do you think he would tell us? Impersonate Jesus and tell us.
7. And now moving from Christmas celebrations to Baptisms, First Communion and Marriages, etc., do you think they are in keeping with the Gospel teachings? Why? Kindly, give us some hints on what we could do about them.
8. Do we share the joys of our Christians celebrations, births, Baptisms, First Communion, Marriages, etc. with our servants, subordinates, poorer neighbors and the destitute? Why not?
9. Could we do it? Give us some suggestions
10. What other lessons can you draw from the story “Tonight is Christmas!”

THOUGHTS FOR AN INPUT

- Our “Christian-religious” celebrations to a very large extent have lost their religious meaning. They have become just social celebrations
- The “Religious Rites and Ceremonies” preceding our social celebrations, (For instance, Baptisms, 1st Communion, Marriages, etc) have become empty rites and rituals.
- The social celebration part is given more importance than the Sacramental nature of our rites
- Quite often we celebrate for celebration sake.
- **The religious rites and sacraments have become the occasion not the cause of our merry making.**
- We are very generous spending heavily on ourselves in our merry making celebrations, while we think little of others needs.
- Our over-expensive and ostentatious celebrations have become just “**status symbols**”, sort of a “**show offs**” meant more to boost our “ego” than to really rejoice and share our happiness with others.
- **We have to be aware less the religious meaning of our Liturgical and Sacramental Celebrations is lost to the external fanfare.**

- At Baptisms and Weddings, while relatively small numbers of family members and friends attend our Religious celebrations in the Church, the halls and Hotel rooms are overflowing with them..
- If Jesus would to attend our “posh” celebrations in the simple way he dressed and behaved”, he would be shown the door straight away.

BIBLE TEXTS

Lk 14/15-24	The parable of the Great Feast, Call the poor, the beggars, the crippled, the blind and the lame...”
Lk 7/7-14	“When you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends... or rich neighbors... invite also the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind..”
Lk 16/19-31	The parable of the rich Man and Lazarus
Lk 15/22-24	Father of the Prodigal. True Rejoicing. No show
1 Co 11/17-22	Be frugal, share equally in celebration.
Acts 2/44-47	Fraternal celebrations. Sharing in joy.