***“Did You Have a Nice Christmas?”***

I discovered many years ago that arrogance is a hurtful sin. We do not draw people to our loving Savior, Jesus Christ, by attempting to prove to others that we know more than anyone else about customs, traditions, and even the Faith. We draw more people to the love of Christ by daily speaking to ourselves the words of St. John the Baptist, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” If we are to be bearers of the Truth and Love of Jesus Christ, then Ephesians 4:15 “speak the truth in love” should be another phrase that we utter to ourselves. It is so easy, once we have been catechized and trained and formed to forget that there was a time when we did not know what we know today. I often wonder how many people have turned their backs on Jesus because of the followers of Jesus who turned their backs on those who needed Jesus the most. There are far too many “war stories” about church leaders: lay and ordained who have injured the flocks entrusted to their care.

And so, what I am about to say is not meant to be a judgment, but rather, I pray, a teaching moment. On December 26 when someone says to me, “Did you have a good Christmas?” something is stirred up in me, and I want to say, “I AM having a good Christmas” because after all everyone knows that there are Twelve Days in Christmas. Of course, the more accurate answer is “I AM having a good Christmas” but the innocent question allows for us to say kind words to people who in many instances simply do not understand. The culture and also many of the recent church denominations of the last few hundred years have eliminated the Christmas Season, and, as we know, everything ends on December 25, and the new statement beginning on December 26 is “Happy New Year.” This, of course, ends by January 1, and sadly the poor Wisemen have not even arrived yet! But most people don’t know that today. Arrogance and anger will not help them extend the Season as it has traditionally been celebrated, and there is absolutely nothing in the culture to support us as we try to explain the Season and what Epiphany means. For those who simply become upset with the culture it may well be that the “burden” rests with us to explain lovingly and yet with conviction, the importance of all of those days. It also means that if we are priests, we celebrate Mass on January 1 for Holy Name Day/Circumcision, and that we celebrate Mass on Epiphany, January 6. Even if no one shows up we need to do it. We need to set the example, or else our ways of correcting the culture will consist of empty and sometimes arrogant and judgmental words.

So, I hope you are having a good Christmas, and I especially hope that you have taken the days of the Season to feed your souls with Word and Sacrament, and that upon being fed, you will share those fruits lovingly with those who simply believe that everything they need is to be found in the culture. You and I know that’s not true, but how we share it may change a person’s life.

**Keep your eyes on Baby Jesus. If you want to look into the Crèche, you must get down on your knees.**