

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

After Christmas

Tis the season to be ... what? We officially left the Christmas season. The tree has come down and the balls have been boxed. The lights have been pulled down from the gutter and yanked from the shrubbery. The inflatable snowman has been deflated, folded, stuck back in the basement. The last remnants of tinsel have been swept up. The kids' toys have gone through their first set of batteries and are sitting, unloved and ignored, in the back of the closet.

So here we stand, in the throes of winter: unadorned, our branches bare. We are completely empty of festivity. We have more than a month before the next big Hallmark moment—Valentine's Day—and there is nothing left to do but pick up the pine needles, warm up the chowder, and scan the skies for snow.

We are not distracted anymore by bright lights and piped in music. We can't blame our behavior on the eggnog and the mistletoe. We are down to brass tacks, I think. Life doesn't get any more elemental or basic than now, in the deepest weeks of winter. And so, there is no better time to commune with the Creator—to contemplate, reflect, review.

It's a good time, I think, to take stock.

We have made it through Advent and Christmas. We waited in joyful hope for ... what?

"Well," I can hear you say, "Jesus, of course."

But what have we done with that? Have we made Him a comfortable guest in our homes?

Have we taken the spirit of the season into our hearts? Or have we put it away with the lights and the tinsel? When we welcomed the newborn redeemer into the world, was it only for a week or two, with a song and cup of good cheer?

Or have we tried to commemorate the moment of incarnation by making The Word Made Flesh a part of our *own* flesh—by embodying Him to others?

I'll be honest with you. Whenever I take stock in the early days of the new year, I always fall short. By this time in January, I'm never as good as I hoped to be just a few short days ago. It's right about now that I start to give up those resolutions. (Ben and Jerry? Bring 'em on!)

That happens, too, in my spiritual life. The halo that I imagined wearing the rest of the year has slipped and is dangling off my ear. I'm not as prayerful as I'd planned—or as consistent in living out the Spirit of Christmas. I've started snarling.

But I'm comforted by remembering that it is never too late. Every day holds out hope. Resolutions can be remade, just like a rumpled bed. (Maybe this is one reason for that often-neglected Sacrament, Reconciliation?)

The year is young. The hour is early. The days are beginning to lengthen.

And in the bleakness of January, the shimmering words of Revelation seem to me to burn brighter than ever:

"Behold. I make all things new."

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