

White Robed Monks of St. Benedict

Christmas Reflection: The Wonder of the Child

And she gave birth to her firstborn son ... and laid him in a manger... (Luke 2:7)

Bottom of Form

During this Christmas Season and thereafter please let our attention turn to a single image: a newborn resting in a cradle. A tiny face not yet shaped by ego, pride, fear, or the endless storytelling of the adult mind. For a moment, imagine that infant as a living symbol of universal consciousness. A mind open like a clear pool. A mind as yet unfretted by the default mode network, ego, that busy brain cluster that we use to keep us worrying about a time bound imagined past and rehearsing an imagined future existing in an illusive present..

That child is not calculating status. Not defending opinions. Not carrying grudges. Not judging itself or anyone else. The infant simply *is*, awake in a soft field of presence.

Christmas invites us to return to that state, not by becoming childish, but by becoming childlike. Remember that scripture reminds us: *Unless you have the mind of a child, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.* (Matt 18:3-11) It invites us to touch a deeper awareness that is already inside us, waiting under the noise of our time bound egoic lives.

Think for a moment about the two worlds in which we all live. There is the time bound world of resolvable problems. These are the metaphoric left brain **complicated** circumstances. These are the things we can fix with tools, plans, and lists. Taxes. Parking. Budgets. Schedules. All the stuff that fills-up forms and clutters our desks. These complicated problems respond to logic and effort.

Then there is the world of time bound irresolvable **complex** circumstances. These are the metaphoric right brain knots. The things no calculator can solve. Broken trust between siblings. The ache of love that comes and goes. Loneliness that rolls in like weather. Family patterns that repeat themselves year after year, even during holidays when we hope for peace. These complex happenings do not respond to checklists. They ask for awareness, not control.

What would these two worlds look like from the perspective of timeless universal consciousness? What would they look like through the eyes of that ego-free infant?

First, the left brain complicated problems. Universal consciousness does not deny them. Taxes are real. Rent is real. Illness is real. The infant is not naive. But the infant does not add extra weight. It does not say, *I am failing because this is hard*. It simply meets what is in front of it.

When we face our resolvable complicated circumstances with that same timeless clear presence, something shifts. Instead of reacting from fear, we act from steadiness. Instead of seeing the task as an enemy, we see it as a temporary visitor. Christmas calls us back to that clarity. Not to avoid our responsibilities. We meet them without creating on a story of worry or shame, turning the circumstance into a drama ridden situation.

Now think about the time bound right brain complex circumstances. These complex ones that do not bow to logic: Relationships, Identity, the desire to be seen, the fear of loss. At the adult level, these are time bound tangled roots. But an infant meets the world without defenses. It looks at a face and sees a face, not a history or an imagined future. It cries when it needs connection and stops when connection comes. It trusts without needing a reason.

Christmas invites us to see relationship through that lens. It invites us to soften the hard shell around the heart. It invites us to release the old time bound inner narrator that says, *I am right, they are wrong, this will never change*. When we step aside the ego, compassion steps forward. We stop trying to win and start trying to understand.

To be Christ-like, in this universal sense, does not mean being perfect. Perfection is itself perfection just as it is in the moment. It does not mean ignoring pain or pretending to feel things we do not feel. It means waking up to the timeless awareness that lives beneath our defenses. It means seeing others as fellow travelers carrying their own invisible bundles of fear and hope. It means appreciating the circumstances of Life just as they are without taking them personally and, thereby, creating situations replete with the drama of the moment and emotional attachment.

There is a simple practice that fits the spirit of this day. When you feel a surge of irritation or judgment toward someone, pause for one breath. In that breath, ask yourself two quiet questions: ***What is this person afraid of? What am I afraid of?*** These questions do not excuse harm, but they open a window for empathy. It moves you closer to that timeless awareness of the infant who sees without the filter of ego.

Another way to be Christ-like from this universal perspective is to remember that compassion begins within. Many people try to pour kindness into the world while speaking harshly to themselves. But the infant in the cradle does not shame itself. It does not call itself weak or foolish. It simply lives in the truth of the moment. When you speak to yourself with that same gentleness, the rest of your life shifts. Just pause and ask: *What am I doing right now in this moment – breathing*. Your words become softer. Your choices become cleaner. Your presence becomes healing.

Christmas also reminds us that every person we meet carries both kinds of problems. The metaphoric left brain that puzzles and the right brain that mystifies. The resolvable and the irresolvable. The surface issues and the hidden longings. Each of us is walking around with taxes in one hand and heartbreak in the other. When we remember that,

we stop assuming that the person in front of us is simple. We start seeing them as layered, like we are.

In this season of lights, let us practice seeing beneath the surface. Let us speak from clarity instead of fear. Let us pause before reacting. Let us remember that the deepest wisdom often arrives not through thinking but through listening with a quiet mind.

The infant in the cradle is a symbol of timeless mind before ego, a heart before division, a presence before identity. When we touch that state, even for a moment, we become more patient. More steady. More human. And more divine, in the universal sense of the word.

So as we leave here today, let this be the shape of our Christmas prayer:

May we meet the resolvable circumstances with calm attention.
May we meet the irresolvable circumstances with compassion.
May we speak to ourselves with the gentleness of the child.
And may we offer others the same understanding we are seeking.

For in that way, we become Christ-like. Not in grand gestures, but in small acts of timeless presence, aware breathing. Not in power, but in awareness. Not in certainty, but in love.

May this Christmas Season let peace settle gently in your minds/hearts and in your home to invigorate and enlighten all whom you may meet.

Thank you. Peace and Joy!

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