

*“The Lord is near; come let us adore him! Come to adore the God who does not forsake those who seek him with a sincere heart and strive to keep his law. Heed his message which strengthens hearts broken and confused ... May the joy of Christmas, which sings of the birth of the Savior, instill in all trust in the power of truth and of patient perseverance in doing good. For each of us the divine message of Bethlehem resounds: Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy, to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”* (Pope St. John Paul II, *Urbi Et Orbi* Message, Christmas 1998).

Pope John Paul II’s Christmas message in 1998 is not too different from the message given by Pope Leo XIV to priests and religious on this year’s feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe: “Since we live in a confusing society of noise, today more than ever we need servants and disciples who announce the absolute primacy of Christ and who keep His voice clearly in their ears and hearts.”

Indeed, it becomes too easy to forget Christ in our secular world; he can even be forgotten at Christmas. But the Church, since the beginning, encourages all Catholic Christians to never forget the best and most wonderful gift that God has given to us – Jesus Christ.

Forgetting Jesus means forgetting who we are, for it is only Christ who reveals God to man and man to himself. Thus, when we forget Jesus, “we forget that we have been created for greater things. We have been created to love and to be loved and we have been created in the image of God” (St. Teresa of Calcutta).

This is why Jesus, at the Last Supper, stressed the importance of remembering him: *Then he took the bread, said the blessing, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which will be given for you; do this in memory of me”* (Lk 22:19), which Catholic Christians do at every Mass.

This Christmas, with God’s grace and a determined will, let us *remember* Jesus and *return him* to his rightful place: to the center of our persons, our marriages, our families, our homes, and our workplaces; in a word, to the center of our lives.

Merry Christmas to you and to your families! *The Lord is near; come let us adore him!*

Father Frei