

Wonderful, Counsellor

December 25, 2010

Christmas Day is a suitable moment to recall why we may and should rejoice in the coming of Our Lord Jesus Christ. He and he alone can solve all the real problems of men, which go back to the very beginnings of mankind, and which are graver than ever today.

This is because all real problems of men involve sin. Any purely material disorder only becomes serious if it is in some way spiritual, for instance if a physical illness makes a man curse or bless. And anything spiritual that goes on inside me is only a disorder if it is in some way a sin. For instance Job lamented bitterly his physical afflictions, but his lamenting was not sinful. As for sin, it is a disorder or offence primarily against God, secondarily against self and only thirdly against neighbour.

Therefore all real problems of men which are not merely material problems, are problems of men having offended God. A terrible example is provided by a woman who has committed an abortion. Superficially her problem is solved. The baby is out of the way, and her life is "back to normal." But deep down, either she hardens her heart (and joins in a world coming to hate and suppress Christmas), or she knows and admits to herself that she has done something terribly wrong. Either way something in her is more or less twisted out of true for the rest of her days, and many such women, even if they are Catholics and know by their Faith that God has forgiven them through sacramental Absolution, can still be tormented, such is the wound that that sin has inflicted on their souls. Nor is abortion the worst of sins. Sinning directly against God is graver.

Grim thoughts for Christmas Day? Yes and no. The problem of sin is grim, but the joy of knowing that it has a real

solution is correspondingly great. If the poor girl goes to confession, almost every Catholic priest will do all he can to persuade her that if she is truly sorry for her sin (with a sorrow of Peter and not of Judas Iscariot), then through his absolving her she may not doubt that God has forgiven her. How many penitents then walk out of the confessional with a sense of relief and joy that nothing else can give them, because offending God was at the heart of their torment, and they know that God has forgiven them.

And where did this joy take its beginning? In the certainty that God took a human nature from a Jewish maiden, lived upon earth and gave us, amongst other sacraments, that of Penance, deriving its force from the merits of his Passion and Death, which he endured only with the help of the same maiden and mother. But how could he have died unless he had been born? It all began with his human birth from the Blessed Virgin Mary – Christmas.

So the solution of all the world's most terrible problems of my fellow-men and myself is available. No wonder Catholics are joyful. No wonder there is a special joy available even to disbelievers at Christmastime – so long as they have not yet hardened their hearts.

Kyrie eleison.