

Christmas 2017

Come with me and let us all imagine together looking up at the winter sky. The stars are most brilliant when it is very cold. They say that you can see about 3000 stars with the naked eye on a given night. Let us stop and ponder the grandeur and immensity of all creation. With a telescope it is quite another matter.

Astronomers estimate that the observable universe has more than 100 billion galaxies. Our own Milky Way is home to around 300 billion stars. Astronomers estimate the total number of stars at roughly 70 billion trillion (7×10^{22}). This year we are going to launch the Webb telescope into space. It will be located three times the distance to the moon away from Earth and we will be able to see farther than ever before. I suspect that we have not begun to scratch the surface of all of creation.

And here I am. Little ole me in this vast expanse of creation. Or look into a microscope and it is every bit as complex. Look into a telescope or a microscope, the macrocosm and the microcosm. In all of this immensity our Lord, Creator of all, comes to me. And that's not all. Instead of looking at the sky, look into a newborn baby's eyes. Or look into a mirror at your own eyes. Look beyond the hurt and pain and doubts and fears that have come from the hard knocks of life. Look deep into your soul and there, more magnificent than the entire created universe, is your immortal soul, created in the image and likeness of God.

And it is there in the deepest recesses of your soul, it is there that God lives. All of your vitality, your spirit, your energy, it all finds its origin there. You are a child of God in the most intimate sense of the word.

The joy of Christmas therefore is your joy. The cold and dark and evil of this world, whatever heaviness, or health problems, or betrayal or disappointments, whatever weighs you down, cannot contradict the joy of God among to you.

And then you take the miracle of your soul and look around and see all the wacky personalities and individuals that make up your social life. Each one more magnificent than the entire

created universe. And you put us all together into the sacrament of love and we sing, 'joy to the world, our Lord is come. Let Earth receive her King.

Furthermore, it is important to note that this magnanimous moment is especially directed to the most impoverished and desolate person among us. Christmas comes to bring us hope when there is no hope, and to bring us joy where there is little joy.

The prayer of St. Francis says it best.:

Lord make me an instrument of your peace

Where there is hatred let me sow love

Where there is injury, pardon

Where there is doubt, faith

Where there is despair, hope

Where there is darkness, light

And where there is sadness, joy

O divine master grant that I may

not so much seek to be consoled as to console

to be understood as to understand

To be loved as to love

For it is in giving that we receive

it is in pardoning that we are pardoned

And it's in dying that we are born to eternal life

Amen

.