

December 3, 2017
EXPRESSIONS by Father Ed



Advent

The day after Thanksgiving, Black Friday, is the official beginning of the Christmas shopping season – and not just here in America but around the world. I was surprised to see signs – in English – advertising Black Friday even in Paris and Turin. The Christmas street markets, however, don't open until the first Sunday of Advent, which is unusually late this year. Christmas Eve and the last Sunday of Advent fall on the same day this year, meaning there are only three, not four, weeks of Advent. The preparation for Christmas – both commercially and spiritually – is, then, much shorter this year. Personally, I am not so concerned because I shop all year long. If I see something I think someone might appreciate, I buy it then and save it for Christmas or some other important occasion.

The weeks before Christmas always have seemed to me more festive than the days immediately following. Christmas Day is more like the end than the beginning of the season. Most people, for instance, don't keep their decorations out until the Epiphany, the religious conclusion of the holiday. By New Year's Day, everything is over. I am one of those persons, however, that never want Christmas to end. It is a unique season with an eternally appealing message. Christmas re-imagines life, extends blessings of joy, peace, and goodwill, and celebrates the poor and insignificant, represented by the shepherds, the Holy Innocents and, of course, Jesus Himself. More than gifts, Christmas is meant to evoke values that express love, respect, generosity, and kindness. Christmas, even in its commercial dimensions, emphasizes the importance of sharing with others.

Each of us – and the wider world – needs the annual inspiration of Christmas. God became human to show us how to be humane in our actions and attitudes. At Christmas, most people are happier, more generous, and more likable. We seem to lose our negative dispositions. The season brings out our best. Perhaps, this is because we are primarily focused on others, not ourselves. While it may be a hectic season, filled with shopping and much rushing here and there, Christmas is a time for celebration. We enjoy people with whom we don't spend enough time, we displace work with a little bit of fun and, despite the stress of squeezing everything in, it is a happy season. Christmas re-establishes the basic priorities of life and helps make us a bit more decent, respectful, and altruistic, definitely a very positive tendency in today's world.

You may still read Expressions when you are away . . .

Like us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ExpressionsbyFr.Ed>

or read the Expressions by Father Ed at <http://sttimothymorrobbay.org/expressions.html>