

Elvis Presley, the king of rock-n-roll, once sang: “Oh why can’t every day be like Christmas. Why can’t that feeling go on endlessly. For if every day could be just like Christmas, what a wonderful world this would be.”

Today we celebrate that the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords, the God of the whole universe, became flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. As a people of faith, the celebration of Christmas, is all about how God became one of us. He did this to reveal the love and heart of God, and the way to love God, others, and ourselves, so that we could personally experience the joy of endless intimacy and union with God. Since Jesus understands us and the human condition with a human heart, He can be empathetic and merciful, as both our Brother and our Savior.

Believe it or not, Elvis’s heartfelt desire for “every day to be like Christmas” and for it “go on endlessly” is actually solid Christian theology and spirituality. The soul of Christmas is all about God sharing in our humanity to love, enlighten, heal, transform, and save us. He didn’t want that to stop after His Ascension into heavenly glory. Christmas is ideally a daily reality in which we continually allow Jesus Christ to be born anew in our hearts, and become flesh in our attitudes, words, actions, and

lifestyle. Jesus wants to progressively live in our hearts, in a new and deeper way, as our journey of life and faith continues to unfold.

Yet it goes a step further than that. He also wants to bless the world, moment by moment, with His tangible presence, in and through us. St. Teresa of Avila articulates it in the most thought-provoking manner through these following words: “Christ has no body but yours, no hands, no feet on earth but yours, yours are the eyes with which He looks compassion on this world, yours are the feet with which He walks to do good, yours are the hands, with which He blesses all the world.” We are irrevocably connected with making Christmas a daily and endless reality, for ourselves and others, through our ongoing consent and cooperation. We are the human and divine touch of Jesus Christ for His people.

Therefore, what do we need to do to make this a reality, with the help of God’s grace? I would like to answer that question through the lens of one of my all-time favorite movies, “Remember the Titans.” It is based on a true story. Herman Boone was the head coach of the high school football team known as the T.C. Williams Titans, in Alexandria, Virginia. He was relentless taskmaster who bluntly told his players, “You must be perfect!” The team

internalized his message and expectations. The Titans went undefeated that year and won the Virginia High School Championship Game. I would like to emphasize they were perfect in their record, but they were not always perfect in their play on the field.

Applying this dynamic to the Christian life, we will never be fully or consistently perfect, but that does not have to deter us from continually striving for personal, spiritual, moral, and religious excellence. One of the biggest temptations in life, sports, and in our walk with the Lord, is to rest on our laurels and become too complacent, self-satisfied, and indifferent. When it comes to matters of God and faith, we lose our hunger, passion, focus, and vision. We end up becoming satisfied with mediocrity or even less than that.

The Good News is that we make Christmas more of an ongoing reality through our renewed desire and commitment to personal, spiritual, moral, and religious excellence. So how can we do that? Understanding the Sacred Scriptures and Church Teaching as our PLAYBOOK, we begin to study them diligently so that God and the will of God: is in the forefront of our consciousness; integrated into our hearts, and more fully lived out in our lives. Understanding religious media and technology as

watching GAME FILM, we acquire a deeper and broader perspective on various aspects of faith, spirituality, and morality. Understanding fidelity to daily prayer, the sacraments, and the development of the Christian virtues as PRACTICE, we seek to go the next level in living out our faith and embracing the finer points of Christian living. Understanding community life and spiritual friends as TEAMMATES, we strive to encourage, inspire, enlighten, and challenge one another. Through word and example, we invite each other to be more loving, prayerful, courageous, faithful, and virtuous. While showing deep empathy and compassion, we persevere in calling others to excellence in God.

As we individually and collectively move from living like the Prodigal Son, to mediocrity, to a commitment to excellence for God, God will progressively become flesh in a manner that influences a wider range of people. His love, mercy, and wisdom will be born, or born anew, in the home, workplace, classroom, society, and the church. As we open our hearts to God, motivated by a spirit of love and excellence, He blesses us with the Christmas presents of an ever deepening faith, hope, love, and the various gifts and virtues of the Christian life. As these realities become flesh in our lives, we strive to pay it

forward and offer these same presents to those around us. It is truly a graced cycle of giving and receiving, that keeps on blessing both the receiver and the giver. We become ongoing Christmas presents for each other as we bring and become Jesus Christ for others.

With this commitment to excellence for God, each of us, in our own unique way, begin to live out the following words from Patti Labelle's song "New Attitude:" "I'm feeling good from my hat to my shoe. Know where I am going and I know what to do. I've tidied up my point of view. I've got a new attitude. I'm in control, my worries are few, cause I got love like I never knew. Ooh oh ooo oh. I've got a new attitude."

This new attitude fulfills Elvis's, but most importantly, Jesus Christ's, heartfelt desire, that Christmas be experienced daily and endlessly. As this spiritual reality unfolds, the world becomes a more wonderful place, because Jesus Christ is continually being born and reborn in the hearts of His people. May our lives and the lives of all Christians be filled with the Christmas spirit, all year long!!!

