

Christmas, 2013

Have you found what you are looking for?

-- We've probably heard that phrase a lot the past several weeks, especially as we've been out Christmas shopping or performing various errands typical of this time in December.

-- We look for certain things when we shop, whether for presents, food or other things we need. But there are some deeper things we are looking for in life than presents or food.

-- In late October, I walked nine days of the Camino, the road to Santiago de Compostela in Northwest Spain. I met people along the way with various goals and needs. Some were looking for a physical challenge. Some were walking in memory of a deceased relative, like Richard, my Irish friend. Some were dealing with divorce, like the Canadian woman I met who had undertaken an annulment.

-- When pilgrims reach the city and get their camino certificates, they are asked whether their purpose was religious, physical, spiritual or something else. What were **they** looking for?

-- Virtually all of us are familiar with the Christmas story: the young couple with child, relegated to a stable to give birth, the shepherds, the angels singing the praises of the infant Savior, eventually, the visit of the wise men from the East.

-- The people of Jesus' day and nation were looking for one who would save them and make them free from foreign rule. The prophets spoke of this Messiah.

-- Each of us comes here looking for something. What are **we** looking for? We don't have to be here. Sure, some of us come out of tradition. Many of us come here frequently; some who are here come less frequently. But we all come looking for something.

-- Perhaps we are looking for healing for relationships, in our family, our community or among friends. Perhaps we seek physical and/or mental healing for someone close to us. Maybe we are just seeking for a little more peace in our lives.

-- Christmas reminds us that God came to us, not as a great king but as a helpless child. He arrived under modest circumstances. His first visitors were poor and unrefined shepherds, not persons of greatness.

-- And St. Paul tells us that this is all a result of God's mercy. Christmas is not something we earn by righteous deeds (not here to find out "who's naughty and nice," even if God knows all things).

-- The gift of the Savior is just that—a pure gift. It is as undeserved as any gift you or I will receive this Christmas, or any other Xmas, for that matter.

-- The gift God gives us is a Word of eternal life. It is the Word made Flesh, Jesus Christ himself. This eternal life is not some vague hope for some uncertain future.

-- It is God's unconditional love bestowed on us now. Yes, we will only grasp it fully when all things come to pass in this life. But it is present now.

-- Faith helps us grasp the presence of God's unconditional love in the Word made Flesh. We seek many things in life, but they can only be fulfilled in the true sense in God himself. No earthly treasure, or even the closest human relationship, can do that.

-- The Good News is that God does seek us out. He sent his Son for that reason. He did not send him as a king, but as a boy born in modest circumstances who had to grow up as we all have.

-- Have **we** found what we are looking for? He is here, right now. We need not look for something else.

-- May you, your family and all those you love have a blessed Christmas holiday, knowing that all you are looking for is fulfilled in finding Jesus Christ, the Word made Flesh who has dwelt among us.

-- **He** is the One we should be looking for.