

For a Child is born for us this day. A child who is so poor that he is wrapped in rags, laid in a feed trough, warmed by the breath of beasts of burden. A child who at the same time is the Son of God, the one who created all that is seen and unseen, who holds the whole world and all creation together through a casual act of His will.

He is a darling baby boy, and we marvel at Him as we marvel at every baby at every birth. He is a Child who by His very presence changes the very nature of nature itself, for after all, how can the world fail to be changed by the presence of this wonderful mystery, fully God, fully man, a little baby, present in our mist?

He is the ultimate servant, he is the King, he is the Sacrifice. Just as the unblemished lamb is born to be sacrificed on the altar in the Temple, this Child is born to be sacrificed to carry the burden of our sins through His Passion and death on the altar of the Cross.

Where would we be today without the birth of the Son of God as the Son of Man? No one else has had such a profound effect on human society as this tiny babe. His birth, his time on earth, his sacrifice fundamentally shapes human society. Without Jesus, the world as we know it would not exist.

Our concept of right and wrong, our concept of justice, our concept of mercy are all based on his teaching and his actions. Yes, the Father gave us the 10 Commandments long before the birth of Christ, but this babe taught us how to live those Commandments instead of just following them like a check-list.

He showed us how to be a good child, he was an attentive student and apprentice, learning how to read, to write, to do arithmetic from his parents. His parents were also the ones who taught Jesus his Hebrew faith by word, study and example, showing us how to be the very best teachers of our faith to our own children.

He worked every day with his father Joseph as a carpenter, making furniture, helping to build homes, repairing broken items. Their skill probably equates to a master furniture maker in today's terms. And when Joseph passed away, he supported his family, his mother with the same skills. His talent demanded a good wage, yet they lived in relative poverty as he continued the practice of his parents in being generous with the Temple and by giving aid to the poor.

Even as an adult, as the head of the family, he still listened to his mother and did whatever she asked of him, a practice that continues to this day and will for all eternity.

At the Last Supper, he initiated the structure of his Church with the Sacrament of Holy Orders. That same Church had guided society through our darkest hours, preserved knowledge that would have been lost to history and even with the problems we have today, continues to be the moral beacon for all humanity.

With his Passion and death he taught us the complete meaning of love, of dignity in the face of adversity, and in the power of faith and hope for eternal life with his promise to the Good Thief. He showed us how to resist temptation and despair by trusting in him as he trusted in his Father during his darkest hour.

He came back to us 3 days later to show us that he conquered death and continued to instruct the Apostles for the next 40 days who have in turn instructed us. After he ascended to be with the Father, he sent the Holy Spirit to establish his church and enkindle in us the fire of his love.

This small child has given all of this to us and so much more. He has given us all that we have, all that we are, all we ever will be. Although He is the Only Begotten, He is also the First Born. When you have a First Born, the implication and assumption is that there are others to follow. We are the others to follow. He has adopted us into His family through the grace of our Baptism. He made His Mother, our Mother. His gift is eternal life with Him in His kingdom for all who believe in Him and keep His word.

The Christ Child, the sacrifice child, was rejected in the cities of David; Bethlehem at His birth, and Jerusalem at His death. He has been rejected in whole or in part by those in positions of influence and power and their followers throughout the ages.

So what does the Child ask of us? What is our gift to the one who has given so much to us? He asks that we do not reject Him, in whole or in part. All He wants for His birthday is for us to do as he asks, and to return to Him with humble and contrite hearts.