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The Presence of Christmas (Sermon Notes)
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For some reason this year, I've been spending a lot of time thinking about the Presence of Christmas vs. the Christmas Presents.

I get the presents part, that's easy.

But the Presence of Christmas **stops** me and then **suspends** me into sort of a great ornament hanging

somewhere in the cosmos,
strung in the starry night sky
looking for Christmas
today, meaning every day.
Meaning its presence

It struck me that considering the birth of Jesus is very much like entering into the narrative of the world for the last 2,000 years.

Where in one place or another has the life of Jesus not touched everything?

In fact, for many of us, we have celebrated as many Christmasses as we are old, multiplied by the more than 2,000 times we've remembered Christmas Day since that birth long ago.

In a way, suspended from the lights that penetrate the night sky, I've been trying to find one star in the great galaxy, one thread that I can hold onto for a moment and connect to the mystery of God and the Presence of Christmas.

It's not surprising that what I found is probably most what I seek our work here at Jan Hus, our interactions with one another, and for me, as well.

What I am seeking easily flows through the night from the birth narrative. In fact, it is, I think, present in every birth – even in the harshest of times.

It is that moment of wonder, mystery, and eternity when any child is born, and it draws up the deepest response and fullness the heart can muster: in a word,

Gentleness.

Acknowledging, as I will, that we live and operate in a world that is filled with
 strife,
 contention,
 and sometimes few solutions in sight –

is not meant to say that we should withdraw any more than God did in sending Jesus into this world. In fact, it seems God engaged the world in the incarnation of God's love and gentleness.

The irony is stunning: a newborn to face the world then and now.

For me, I find more meaning in a quote of St. Francis deSales, when he said: "Nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing so gentle as real strength."

It takes real inner strength to be gentle... to pause and pray and set aside my fears or worries about threats to some authority and replace it with patience and gentleness. Nor is this a call to passivity or lack of action. In fact, it is a call to taking the risks involved in following a path not of this world..

For me, I see The Birth of Jesus, Christmas as definitive truth about the universe, its many and parallel worlds, and the Creator – that the hope for it all is embodied in the lessons and gentleness of children, that takes a bit more effort to maintain with the passing of time.

The wonderful stories of Christmas – the stars, the kings, the carols, and longings they stir – do make me feel childlike, warmed and yearning more for the gentleness it kindles.

The Presence of Christmas, to be faithful even in the midst of wonder and to know the child Jesus as each of us. All the more reason to be gentle and know we are greatly loved by the same one who sent him to us for all times, including Christmas Day.

Pray with me for a gentle self and a strength to be so.

Perhaps it is there that the Presence of Christmas gives us the greatest of gifts for each of our days.