



Priestly People

WE ALL ARE THE PRIESTLY PEOPLE OF GOD. TOGETHER, WE ARE LEADERS IN RESPONDING TO THE EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF PRIESTS AND BROTHERS.

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Christmas 2017

Dear Priestly People

One day after my ordination, while I was driving on the Long Island Expressway in New York, I began singing aloud spontaneously; "What a difference a day makes, 24 little hours." One day I was Deacon David and the next day I was Father David. The day before my ordination I could not absolve sins, anoint the sick or consecrate the bread and wine that would become the Body and Blood of Christ. On the day of my ordination my life was radically transformed and I was ontologically changed. God's gift of the Sacrament of Holy Orders really did make a difference in my life. But without the birth of Jesus Christ and the many generations of people who transmitted that faith, life for me could have been quite different. Persons of faith made a difference in my life.

That first Christmas day when Our Blessed Mother gave birth to Her Son, Jesus Christ, and the world was forever changed. It would never be the same again. Mary's "Yes" to the Archangel Gabriel made a difference. The Word of God became human and the Son of God became flesh. When Jesus came into our world and became one of us and one with us, He recreated us and gave us the opportunity to live life to the full, to help establish His Kingdom on earth. The gift of His grace empowered us to become His disciples and witness to the great miracle of His birth, life, death and resurrection. On that Silent Night, that Holy Night, the birth of the Christ child made a difference in our world and in our lives.

Today, as in millennia past, we can say with certainty that the people who have walked in darkness have

seen a great light. We can testify that faith in the Lord Jesus does indeed make a difference. In a world where darkness, doubt, hatred, fear, apathy, hopelessness and despair sometimes seem to be overwhelming us, those who follow Jesus are called to be beacons of light. We are called to make a difference. Faith in Jesus gives birth to hope and invigorates a life of charity. Being a person of faith makes a difference.

How often over the past forty years of ordained ministry have I heard people exclaim with sighs and cries of desperation: "What difference does it make?" Young people who may have stopped praying or going to church respond to their parents invitation to come to Christmas Mass with a flip or glib remark claiming that Mass is boring or that it doesn't make a difference whether they pray or not. They say they get nothing out of Mass and that God doesn't answer their prayers. Some even insist God does not exist. Some older people are angry with God and argue that the only "difference" religion makes is to make "things worse for everybody." Individuals and families are overcome with the consequences of self will, alcoholism, drug and sexual addiction, gambling and eating disorders. They sometimes say life is meaningless and feel that no one or nothing in this world could ever make a difference in their lives.

How are we to respond to them? How can we answer their questions or engage them in an honest discussion unless we know and witness personally to what our faith means to us? How would we answer the question if we asked it another way? Suppose we asked ourselves

what difference our faith makes to us? What would we say to them about why we go to church? Or, perhaps to be totally honest, what would we say to them about not going to church – if we ourselves don't go regularly? And how would we address the question of how we live and the values we say we stand for, especially if there are inconsistencies between what we say we believe and how we live? How do we speak to a world divided by political allegiances, fearful of incomprehensible terrorism and facing the possibility of a nuclear holocaust? Do we really believe that the message of Jesus who came to bring peace to people of good will has any real value or credibility?

We, servants of the Paraclete, believe that faith does make a difference. We believe that a life of service, especially to those who are outcasts, marginalized, alienated, ostracized and even among the most despised does make a difference. That difference makes the world and the church a better, safer, holier place.

Let Christ make a difference in your life. This Christmas your "Yes" to God's call to know, love and serve God can help Jesus Christ be reborn in your own heart and born anew in the hearts of those you love. Live your faith. Say your prayers. Go to church. Sing Christmas Carols. Gather with family. Honor your traditions. Share with friends. Give Jesus the gift He

wants most, You. Celebrate the birthday of the one who has made more of a difference in this world than anyone else in history.

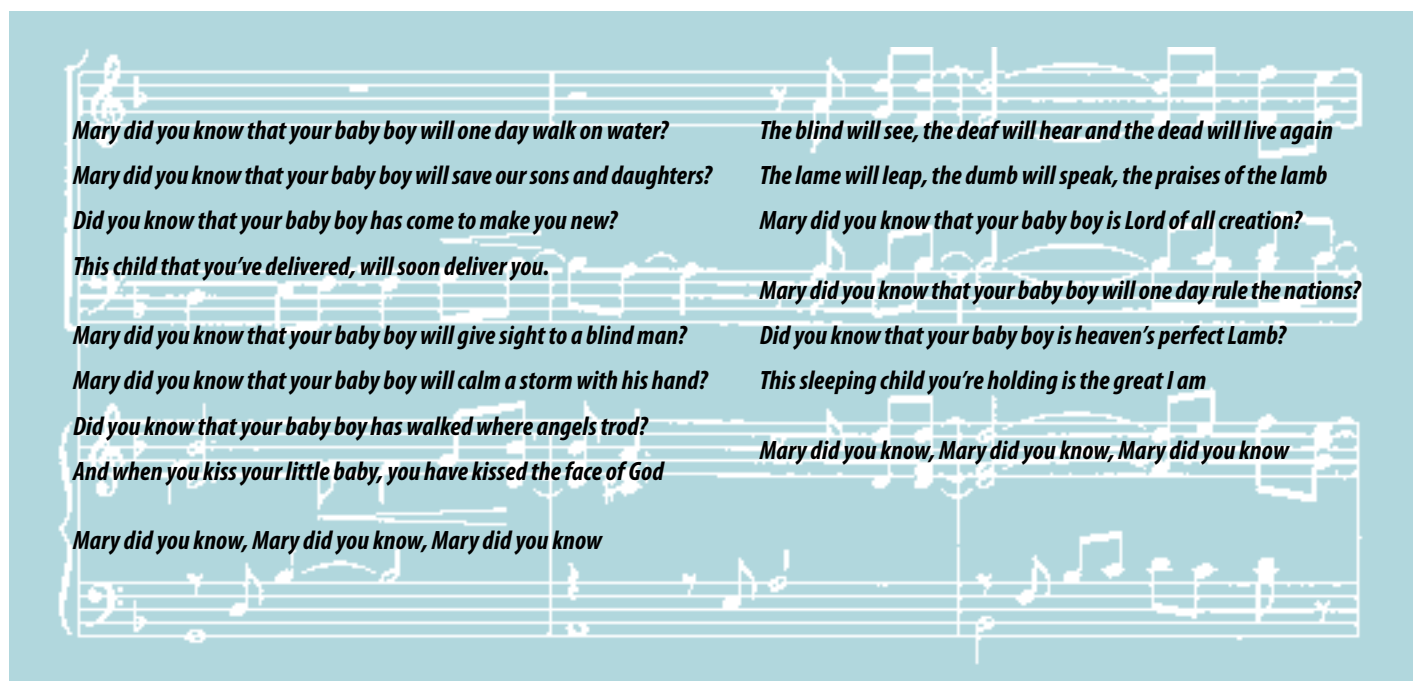
This Christmas please remember the Servants of the Paraclete in your prayers. Our ministry to priests and brothers continues despite the many obstacles we face. We are truly blessed. We see each obstacle as a blessing to be uncovered and discovered. We are who we are and do what we do because we believe that faith in Jesus and fidelity to His commandments do make a difference. We thank you for making a difference in our lives and Ministry by your kindness, support and generosity. Please be assured that your gifts and sacrifices are genuinely appreciated.

You, our benefactors, and your families will be remembered in the prayers and Masses we offer on Christmas Day and throughout the Christmas season and New Year. May the Lord Jesus Christ bless you and fill your souls with the Peace only God can give.

Blessings during this Christmas season,



Very Reverend David T. Fitzgerald sP
Servant General
Servants of the Paraclete



Mary did you know that your baby boy will one day walk on water? The blind will see, the deaf will hear and the dead will live again
Mary did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters? The lame will leap, the dumb will speak, the praises of the lamb
Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new? Mary did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?
This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you. Mary did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations?
Mary did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man? Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?
Mary did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with his hand? This sleeping child you're holding is the great I am
Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod? Mary did you know, Mary did you know, Mary did you know
And when you kiss your little baby, you have kissed the face of God
Mary did you know, Mary did you know, Mary did you know