

Christmas: A Feast without Finish

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Painting of *The Three Magi in the Church of Saint Maurice, Annecy, France*

Christmas is a strange season. When you're a child, it is a season of presents. When you're young, it's a season of parties. When you get your own home, it's a season of preparations. But when you get older, Christmas changes colour drastically. Suddenly, out from behind the advertisements and big dinners, through the haze of old carols and soft candles, past the dazzling altars and sumptuous crib scenes, we begin to see what Christmas is really all about. Christmas is about finding life where we did not expect life to be.

Every year of life waxes and wanes. Every stage of life comes and goes. Every facet of life is born and then dies. Every good moment is doomed to become only a memory. Every perfect period of living slips through our fingers and disappears. Every hope dims and every possibility turns eventually to dry clay. Until Christmas comes again. Then we are called

at the deepest, most subconscious, least cognizant level to begin to live again.

Christmas brings us all back to the crib of life to start over: aware of what has gone before, conscious that nothing can last, but full of hope that this time, finally, we can learn what it takes to live well, grow to full stature of soul and spirit, get it right.

It is to those looking for life that the figure of the Christ, a child, beckons. Christmas is for those who refuse to give up and grow old, for those to whom life comes newly and with purpose each and every day, for those who can let yesterday go so that life can be full of new possibility always, for those who are agitated with newness whatever their age. Life is for the living, for those in whom Christmas is a feast without finish, a celebration of the constancy of change, a call to begin once more the journey to human joy and holy meaning.