



“Heaven and Earth are United Today, for Christ is Born.”

The other day I was having lunch with a friend of mine that I have known for a long time. During our conversation he told me, with a huge smile on his face, that he was getting really excited about Christmas. Without thinking much about it, I commented to him, “I didn't realize that you were a Christian.” At this point a very puzzled look came over his face and he replied, “What does religion have to do with Christmas?”

When he said this I nearly choked on my iced tea. Was he serious? What does being a Christian have to do with Christmas? I then realized that for a great number of people, Christ has absolutely nothing to do with Christmas. For these people, the holiday is simply about a few days off of work or school and exchanging presents.

As Orthodox Christians we follow the liturgical calendar of the Church throughout the year. This calendar includes the feast days of many saints who have lived truly Christian lives. The liturgical calendar also includes feasts in remembrance of different events that have taken place in the life of Christ and in the history of the Church.

Knowing this, we must keep in mind that Christmas isn't all about lights, gifts, and Santa Claus. Instead, it is the Church's celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Christmas is the time for us to rejoice in the Lord's love for us. It is the time for us to realize that He came into the world so that one day we can be with Him in His Heavenly Kingdom. The Bible tells us in John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

As Christmas time approaches, and we begin to decorate trees, attend Christmas parties, and exchange gifts, we also must remember the reason for this festive time of year. We must remember that we are celebrating the Son of God coming into the world for our salvation. This year, as we celebrate the nativity of Christ, let us all rejoice in His birth and recognize His incredible love for us.