

We associate so many things with our senses.  A simple aroma can trigger a thought or reminiscence.  Whenever I smell hamburger cooking, I think of my grandmother.  I have a mental picture of her cooking hamburger in her small kitchen for a casserole she was preparing.  It is a fond and lingering memory.

There are numerous smells and sounds of Christmas that we cherish as well:  the pine smell of our Christmas tree, the sweetness of sugar cookies baking, the melodic sound of Christmas music, and the sound of the ringing of bells.  There is the rhythm of the Salvation Army bell, the jingling of bells on a sleigh and the resonance of church bells at Midnight Mass.  We cherish these sights and sounds and hold them close to our hearts.

These sights and sounds are temporary and part of the season.  However, it is important that we keep some of the sights and sounds of Christmas as lingering elements in our lives.  The concept of Christmas is definitely not a fleeting one.  We should capture the message of Christmas and make it last throughout the year.  I don't intend for this to sound trite or commercial.

I want to reflect on this for myself and encourage you to do the same.  During the season, we are invited to keep a spot in our hearts for the manger---to build our own edifice for the Christ –child.  This is not a temporary dwelling place but a lasting dwelling place that will transform us as Christians.

Christmas is the beginning of our redemption story.  It is just that---a beginning.  We need to carry the lessons of the season with us throughout the year.  **We need to transform ourselves**

**with humility as we ponder Christ's simple birth in a manger**
. "So they [the shepherds] went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger."( Luke 2:16)
**We need to live the "yes" of Mary.**
"And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart." (Luke 2:19)
**We need to constantly glorify and praise God in our lives.**
"Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them." (Luke 2:20).

So, from now on, when we hear bells, let them conjure for us the message of Christmas, the message of redemption. Let us remember that Christ came to bring us salvation and peace. Let us spread that same message of peace to those whose lives we touch.

*I wish all of you the peace and joy of this holy season. Merry Christmas!*

Pat Haggerty