

Christmas 2007

One way of thinking about the birth of Christ is in terms of gift-giving. Jesus is God's gift to us. Have you ever thought of Jesus in this way?

We are all familiar with gift-giving at this time of year. For many of us it is very labor intensive, though shopping online has made it a little more tolerable! The gifts that we give to others are ways that we tell them that we love them. But as we know, no gift can totally do this. Perhaps that is why we wrap our gifts to hide our poor attempt of saying "I love you."

Giving gifts can be both an embarrassing and humbling experience. It can be embarrassing for the giver who is unsure if the receiver will like the gift. After all, don't many of us say right after our gift is opened by someone "Do you like it?" We do this just to reassure ourselves that we bought the right thing.

It can be humbling for the receiver who may feel unworthy to receive a gift or may feel uncertain how he or she should express his or her thankfulness. For example, we have all received gifts from people for whom we didn't give a gift. That sometimes can make us feel uncomfortable and perhaps a little unworthy.

God's gift of his son to us had these characteristics as well. His birth was a humbling experience – after all he was born in a smelly stable and laid to rest in a manger which was used to feed animals. The Gift itself was wrapped in flesh and was subject to the same limitations of our own fleshly existence except for sin.

The gift of Jesus was also an embarrassing event. An angel announced his birth to shepherds. The angel was eventually joined by a multitude of the heavenly hosts praising God for the gift of his son. Three kings would eventually come to worship and

honor him. Who are we to receive such a gift – we who don't have any similar gift to give in return? We indeed should be embarrassed.

Unlike the gifts that we will receive this Christmas that will eventually break or wear out the gift of the Son of God keeps on giving. Jesus in fact pledges to be with us always until the end of time. Jesus was with us in the good times this past year as we shared with family and friends. Jesus was with us in the not so good times this past year to give us comfort at times of illness and death. Jesus is with us today as we gather around the altar where he feeds us with his body and blood. Get to know Jesus better in the parish gift of the New Testament that will be available for each household after mass.

God has gifted us with his Son. What can we give to God in return?