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WEEKLY LETTER FROM MONSIGNOR KEN

Here's a thought about Christmas that I suspect you have never heard. I guarantee that you will never be able to look at Christmas or the Mass the same!

The Christmas Season officially ends this weekend with the Baptism of the Lord. Of course, we are remembering that moment when Jesus, as an adult (He grew up quickly!) was baptized. It is considered part of the Christmas Season because it also celebrates the mystery of the Incarnation. The Father's Voice announces what was revealed in the manger at Bethlehem: "This is My Beloved Son."

From the Latin, missa, meaning "sent," the word Christmas means, "Christ is sent." From the old English, Cristes Maesse, it also means "Christ's Mass," celebrating His birth. This can mean more than just the Mass we celebrate on Christmas. Every Mass commemorates and makes present the saving sacrifice of Jesus. At the Consecration, the bread and wine become the Body and Blood of Jesus, present on the altar. That happens when the priest says the words of Jesus at the Last Supper: "This is My Body; This is My Blood." With those words the bread and wine are changed and we become present at Calvary.

I believe that in those words we are also present in Bethlehem. What is God saying to the world in the manger? Looking at that special morning as the celebration of Christ's Mass, God is telling us of the Baby that is born: This is My Body! At Mass, during the Consecration, the Sacrifice of Jesus is remembered and offered, and we are invited to participate. The same happened in Bethlehem. God is telling us that this Child is to become a Sacrifice for us.

As the manger comes down, stop and hear God saying to you, "This is My Body." When you go to Mass, at the Consecration, and you hear those words, think of God offering His Son to us, "This is My Body." When the priest elevates the Host, see Mary and Joseph holding up their Child to us, and hear the Father's Voice: "This is My beloved Son!" When we understand Bethlehem in this way, we can literally speak of Christmas as Christ's Mass!

"For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night He was handed over, took bread, and after He had given thanks, broke it and said, 'This is my Body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.'" (1 Corinthians 11:23-24)