

An old Shaker Song has the lyrics, "It's a gift to be simple, it's a gift to be free." Simplicity is a magnificent gift especially when life becomes complicated. The Scripture reminds us of the power of the simplicities of Christmas, those simple but powerful truths that are the real spiritual fuel of this wonderful season. The prophet Micah says that the Messiah will be born not in the glitter and majesty of Jerusalem but in Bethlehem. His words remind us that the Lord is found in ordinary places. You know the familiar carol- "O little town of Bethlehem...in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light." Our homes and families are like Bethlehem. There is no place too small, too dark and no life too troubled where the Lord cannot come.

The letter to the Hebrews speaks of the great sacrifice of Christ in terms of Jesus' life completely dedicated to the Father. The greatest gift we can give to the Lord and to others is ourselves. No expensive Christmas present can substitute for the gift of our own life.

In the Gospel, we see faith when we see Mary. Our Lady of faith! Faith is the act by which we entrust ourselves to God. Who has ever done that better than Mary? Faith is God's gift to us. Who was ever more gifted, more faith-filled than Mary? Devotion to and imitation of Our Lady of Faith will surely make us better disciples of Jesus because Mary was, in fact, the first disciple.

The Lord comes to any open heart. We don't have to indulge in a great deal of expenditure for that to happen. We have only to open our life to Christ and the gift of ourselves remains the most magnificent gift we can give to God. Just as Jesus' greatest gift to the Father was the gift of His life, so our response to Christmas is the commitment of our life to Him and to His Church. Fidelity to the Lord and His Church can effect enormous change in our life on levels we least expect.