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## *Christ Will Be Born*

**An article from the *Cathedral Times*  
by the Very Reverend Samuel G. Candler,  
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After a while, the images just seem to collapse all over themselves. There is a young woman, betrothed and pregnant. She hears voices, those of angels and those of strangers. There is something about a census, taxes, and a mean king. An unexpected birth, in a rough place, outdoors, animals and shepherds, searching and seeking. Magi men show up with foreign offerings, gifts they say.

The gifts tumble all over the place, bulging mostly from catalogs and falling into department store windows. They start showing up in offices and schools. They end up in stockings and under trees. Credit card balances rise. We begin to sense limits. Christmas cards and notes and letters catch up to the catalogs.

Pageants try to capture the spirit. Hugs and kisses try to capture the spirit. Parties try to capture the spirit. Too much food and drink fly right over the spirit. Tempers flare. Old angers re-emerge. Family gatherings become occasions of sorrow and regret. Lonely folks feel more lonely. Hungry folks get hungrier. Some folks go away for vacation. The same feelings go with them, happy or sad.

The end of the year starts showing up. We thought it was about a new birth, a child even. But it's also got some death in it. And it's also time for year-end accounting chores, financial decisions about raises and jobs and more taxes, and charitable giving. The end of the year means we've lost something, and we try to set out New Year's Resolutions.

After a while, the images collapse all over themselves, and the expectations collapse, too. Failed expectations create despair. On the other hand, I am sure that the happiest among us, this time of year, are those who do not seem to expect much at all. They learned something else during Advent, the season of so-called expectation. "Come, thou long expected Jesus," they sang. But during the singing, they realized that Jesus was already here.

Somehow or another, the happiest among us realized that Jesus was already here, even in the rough and mean places, places like a cattle stall or lonely shepherd's field. Jesus is even in the places where folks are going hungry and where young children-the holy innocents-are dying. Even in our hard financial decisions, in our domestic arguments, in another frustrated relationship, Jesus is waiting to be born.

If Jesus can show up as he did two thousand years ago, in an out-of-the-way desert land, to a puzzled couple trying to make ends meet, then Jesus can surely show up in the crazy events we experience every December.

In the midst of all that is around you this year, from the most exciting images to the most desperate, I pray that this fresh grace of Jesus Christ shows up in your life. Watch for it. You might have to dismiss what you expected, or were taught to expect. That precious child-like grace will probably appear when you least expect it.

Christ will be born this Christmas. Christ will be born in your hearts, in your lives, in your families, and in your relationships. Christ will be born in your giving. Christ will be born in your loving and in your being loved. Christ will be born exactly where you need Christ to be born in your life. From a little town in Bethlehem two thousand years ago, that is God's promise to all humankind: Christ will be born exactly where you need Christ to be born.

Sam Candler signature



The Very Rev. Sam Candler

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