



Diocese of Fall River
Office of the Bishop
Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V., D.D.

Bishop da Cunha's 2014 Christmas Message

Dear Friends in Christ,

Jesus still is the reason for the season.

As the celebration of the birth of Christ approaches, we become more and more aware of the changes that have taken place around the celebration of Christmas. Those of us who are a little older remember with nostalgia the time when Christmas was really all about Christ. Unfortunately our secularized culture, materialistic world, and consumeristic society have taken Christ out of Christmas, made Santa Claus the central figure, and made buying and selling the main purpose of the season.

There is a tendency in our modern society to change the whole meaning of Christmas. They even want to change the name. Instead of Christmas, they want to call it Winter Festival; instead of Christmas Tree, they want to call it Community Tree or Holiday Tree; instead of wishing Merry Christmas, they want to wish you Happy Holidays.

As Christians and Catholics, we all have the obligation to bring Christ back to Christmas and make him again the center of our celebration and the reason for the season. We have to teach our younger generation that Christmas is about Christ, not Santa. That giving and receiving gifts is a wonderful expression of our love and appreciation for each other, of what we mean to one another, but it is not the only reason why we wait for December 25th.

All that we sing, say and do, all our shopping and decorating, the sending and receiving of cards, calling and e-mailing each other, should all lead us to welcome Christ into our world, our homes, our lives, and our hearts. When we exchange gifts with friends and loved ones, we must remember that God gave us the most precious gift of all, the gift of his only Son, Jesus, to us and our world. We must also remember that the most important and most precious gift we can give to one other is the gift of ourselves, our time, and our presence.

Unfortunately, there are some who substitute the gift of their presence with material gifts but they cannot. Our gifts are worthless if they are empty of our giving of ourselves. The personal gift of ourselves, our love, care, concern, and compassion that we show to our family and friends might just be the best gift somebody could receive.

We say that Christmas has become too commercialized and secularized, and it is true. But, instead of just condemning the commercialization and secularization of Christmas, how about bringing the message of Christ into the world, with our words and our actions, in order to change this reality? Perhaps, instead of cursing the darkness, we may be bearers of His light to the world.

As I celebrate my first Christmas here in the Diocese of Fall River with all of you, my dear brothers and sisters, I want to wish each and every one of you a truly Blessed, Peaceful, and Holy Christmas. May Christ be the center of your Christmas celebration and the center of your lives.

Merry Christmas! Feliz Natal! Feliz Navidad! Buon Natale! Joyeux Noël!

Sincerely yours in the Lord,

Most Reverend Edgar M. da Cunha, S.D.V.
Bishop of Fall River