

Christmas

Every Christmas my dad would select a four meter high tree to be used at our church for the Sunday School, then used in different location for the Girls and the Boys youth clubs, and finally by the RSL. This tree was decorated with a few symbolic items. **Bells**, represented the ringing out of the "Good new" that Jesus Christ, the one who had been born, would save people from their sins.

Balls represented the fact that God so loved the world he sent his unique Son into the world to die on a tree. An **Angel** perilously fastened to the top of the tree represented an Angel of the Lord who spoke to Joseph, the angel Gabriel who spoke to Zacharias and Mary, and the Angel of the Lord who spoke to the shepherds.

Usually attached to the tree would be a short-hand statement such as: "wise men and shepherds still worship Jesus as Saviour, King of Kings and Lord of Lords." According to the Greek historian Herodotus, the magi (wise men), were an ancient priestly caste of the Parthian Empire. They practised what we know today as Astronomy. They navigated their way to Bethlehem by following a special star that had appeared in the Eastern sky in their homeland.

The challenge for us is to establish a Christmas tradition that is more Christ-o-centric not presents-centric. That's a huge challenge for Christian parents. It's hard to believe that Christmas is about not "getting" when are being bombarded by every form of media that brain washes us into believe that it is about "getting." But that is not what the original Christmas was all about. Jesus tells us that there is more fun in giving than in getting. Do we believe him? If "yes," is this what we feel in our heart of hearts and is being borne out by what we do this Christmas?

A Christian farming family sponsored a "white" family to come to Australia from a war torn African country. The first year the family from Africa worked for them, was housed by them, given meat and so on. That year the yield from the grain harvest was very good. So the Aussie sponsors gave them a \$2000 bonus at Christmas. The next year the grain crops failed. There were no bonuses. The family from Africa were irate about not getting a bonus the second year! "After all," they said, "It is Christmas you know!"

What's your perspective on Christmas? Margaret Stevens from Ballarat writes:

*What does Christmas mean to you?
Over-work and bally-hoo,
Tinsel, presents, carol singing,
Father Christmas, family gathering?
Rush and bustle, increased tension-
Commercialism's wild invention?*

*Her last verse reads:
Make this Christmas quite unique:
Confess your sin, the Saviour seek.
He will hear you when you call,
Give you peace, that covers all:
Discord, yearnings, pride and hurt.
Be born again, to God revert!*