

What's the rush!

Lord, Christmas is here again. It just seems like such a short year since I took down the decorations and threw out the Christmas tree. Obviously, this isn't a leap year, so I must be getting a lot older because time seems to pass much faster.

Here we are again and, of course, I'm not ready for Christmas. Believe it or not, I got plenty of warnings that it was approaching. In fact, they began counting down the days before Halloween. Now, that's really crazy! Who wants to be reminded of the Christmas rush – I would call it 'push.'

After all, we haven't even gone through Black Friday before the canned Christmas music starts blasting in the stores. By the time Christmas comes, we don't want to hear another Christmas song.

Then, there are all the expectations that surround Christmas. Everyone wants something you can't afford. Expectations are high! Money is in short supply! Guilt is multiplied! Parties are never ending! The latest and greatest gifts are expected! Deadlines are set and expected to be met! Suggestions for the perfect gifts come with assurance that they will bring happiness. So the stores tell us as they cajole us into parting with our hard earned cash! Tensions are high! So is depression! Loneliness can raise its ugly head. The in-laws are expecting to be invited, fed, entertained and rewarded! The children, fuelled by peer pressure, think we have a pot of gold that, magically, never runs dry

Look, Lord, this is all too much. Everyone wants to control my life. The advertisements remind me of the need to hurry as the days are counted down. Even like poor Santa, I am expected to make my list and check it several times to make sure that everyone – whether they deserve to be included or not – are included. Otherwise, I may end up having more enemies than friends. After, all, we may have enough of enemies already because we have struck them off from our Christmas list.

And what about that Christmas card list anyway, God. I am expected to send Christmas cards to people who suddenly become friends at Christmas but for the rest of the year, they are total strangers as far as communication is concerned.

And what about the Christmas gift list as well. How am I to know to whom I gave what gift last year. at least, I know that I did not give anyone a plum pudding gift last Christmas. Hopefully, I won't get someone else's rejected plum pudding this Christmas.

Lord, it's all so crazy, rushed, guilt ridden and commercialized. And somehow, I am sucked into it because it is the expected thing to do. I often feel like the salmon trying to swim upstream only to be met by marauding bears along the way ready to gobble up my good intentions.

Where did we go wrong? What has happened to Christmas? We talk about keeping Christ in Christmas but we have taken him out and replaced him with gods of consumption, expectation, chaos and depression. Obviously, Christ does not belong among such gods.

Instead, give me a quiet place to contemplate the real meaning of the season; to realize that all the rushing around and busyness will not fill my heart with peace; that I must empty myself of pressures and expectation thereby, creating a vacuum that can be filled with only You.

Will we ever learn the real secret of the season? Will we ever discover that things don't bring happiness? Will we ever realize that distractions and busyness leave no room in the heart for a Visitor? Will we ever understand that the reason for the season is a Gift that no money can buy, no friendship deserve, no human can own; a gift that is given with no strings attached because it is given freely, lovingly, and all-encompassing to anyone who opens their heart to receive it.

There is no need to max out our credit cards to buy it; or worry if it the right gift or not for someone. There is no need to wrap it up in expensive paper; it already comes in swaddling wrapping clothes. There is no need to panic and rush to the store and find that last minute gift for the person you almost forgot. Instead, go inside your heart and you will find the perfect gift there, already unwrapped and ready to be enjoyed for a lifetime.

Now, God, after all that, I am ready to accept, enjoy and appreciate the Greatest Christmas Gift of all – You!