

Traveling Companion: Do you see what I see?

Fr. Michael Tracey

Dear Friend:

I know Christmas can be a difficult time for many people, including you. I know you labor under many pressures; pressures like wondering what kind of presents to get your family and friends and more especially, wondering how are you going to pay for them. I know you want to make people happy this Christmas. I know you make a lot of sacrifices to achieve that and I know it truly blesses you deep inside when you do this. But, in the back of your mind, you have that dreaded expectation of those credit card bills arriving in early January.

Christmas can be a very confusing time for you, I know. It seems to start earlier and earlier every year. You are bombarded with advertisements for months ahead of time. You have to endure all the Christmas songs every minute of the day for months too. It is no wonder that when Christmas comes, the songs have lost their meaning and appeal. All you want to do it to collapse in exhaustion because you have reached saturation point.

Another thing that all these advertisements bring you is guilt feelings. You feel guilty, not only because you haven't shopped early enough; that you haven't spent enough money on everyone who is to receive a gift; that you haven't even bought the right kind of gifts for the right kinds of persons in your life. I can sympathize with you quandary, your misgivings and even your depression.

Have you ever wondered why you often feel guilty, depressed, or sad at Christmas time? Maybe it is because you think that by sacrificing and giving gifts to people, they will somehow love you more and accept you as their family and friend. But it doesn't always work out that way, does it?

Because of all this, you end up hating Christmas, especially its commercialism and the insatiable appetite it tries to create that leaves you in vacuum.

I know it is hard to swim against the time, to fight the commercialism of the season because the season thrives on creating guilt feelings within you. Obviously, you don't need more guilt so, instead, you give in to the glamour, glitter and tinsel sell of commercial Christmas. After all, no one wants to be labeled a Scrooge.

I know you are bombarded every day with miracle cures, quick fix solutions, and amazing products that will give you a complete makeover. They all promise to create a new you. You see, you are not made over in the image and likeness of someone else sets out before you. But I want to assure you that no one can improve on the way I created you.

Here is my suggestion for you this Christmas. It is very simple. You can't buy it. You can't wrap it! You can only discover it. Find some quiet time. Get a mirror and spend some time looking at yourself. No judgments allowed. Just let the mirror speak to you. Allow it to take you deep inside your heart and soul. Hear me saying to you, in the words of the song, "Do you see what I see?"

You see, when I created you, I created a mirror of myself. But the trouble was that people didn't get it. They couldn't get beyond the surface. I had to get more personal. So, I created the first Christmas and wrapped myself in human form in the person of Jesus. He is a mirror of myself, up close and personal.

So, this Christmas, try to realize that the best gift cannot be wrapped, bought, shared or given. Realize that everything I do, including creating you, as a mirror or myself, is "very good" and cannot be improved upon and that you are the best Christmas gift.

Keep trying to answer the question, "Do you see what I see?" and you will have a miraculous Christmas. Signed, your mirror, God.