

Get ready to celebrate the one who was foretold!

Can you name for me the **7 largest World Religions**?

They are Christians (2.4 B), **Muslims** (1.7 B), **Hindus** (1 B),
Agnostics (700 M), **Buddhists** (500 M), **Atheists** (150 M), and **Jews** (15 M).

How are they similar and **how** are they different?

Well, of these 7 ... 3 of them don't even recognize a God ...
namely the **Agnostics**, the **Buddhists** and the **Atheists**.

And of **the other 4 ... 3 of them ... Christians, Muslims and Jews are monotheistic**,
meaning they believe in One God,
while **Hindus** believe in many Gods.

And of **the 3 that believe in one God ... only Christians have a God ...**
who came to be with His people ... in a coming that was foretold!

Muslims believe in Allah, who they consider totally transcendent and apart from
them ... and there are **no plans for Allah to come to be with them**.

Jews believe in Yahweh, and all the Old Testament Scriptures that announce...
the future coming of ... a King ... who will return The Chosen People to ...
their former place of honor and power among all the peoples of the world.

As far as they're concerned, God has not done this yet ...
and so, they're still waiting for Him to do so someday.

Like the Jews, Christians also believe all the Old Testament Scriptures that
announce the coming of a King ... who would regather the People of God together
...and they see those promises fulfilled ... in the coming of Jesus 2015 years ago!

We heard **one of the Old Testament promises** today when the Prophet **Micah** wrote:

*"You, Bethlehem ... too small to be among the clans of Judah,
from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel;
whose origin is from of old, from ancient times."*

And **we see this prophecy fulfilled ... some 700 years later ...**
with the birth of Jesus in... the little town of Bethlehem.

Micah also prophesized that the new ruler ...

*"(would) stand firm and shepherd his flock ... in the majestic name of the Lord,
His God; and (that) ... his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth."*

We, Christians, see all of this fulfilled in the coming of **Jesus Christ.**

Jesus revealed Himself as the Good Shepherd.

Jesus did everything in the name of His Father.

Jesus' greatness has reached to the ends of the earth.

So, what is it that sets Christianity apart from the other world religions?

Christianity is the only religion with a **God who ...
foretold that He **would come to be with his people** ...
and **then actually did come to be with his people**!**

And here's **the best part!**

Not only did **God come to be with us in the Person of Jesus Christ ...
but **God remains with us to this day in the Person of His Holy Spirit!****

Yes, **our God** has revealed Himself as the Mystery of the Trinity ...
Three persons in One God ... **Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier!**
****God** is one ... and ****God** is with us!****

No other world religion has a God like this ...
a **God** who has come to his people ... and remains with His People.

But we do!

And **5 days from now** ... we and the **2.4 Billion Christians** all over the world
will take time to celebrate the occasion of His first coming 2015 years ago.

We call it **Christmas** ... **the day** that we use to mark all of time!

How could you not believe in Jesus?

- **His coming was foretold by many people for many years.**
- **And when He did come ... he was exactly as foretold.**

Yes, those who believe in the promises of God ... believe in Jesus Christ.

Elizabeth demonstrated this in our Gospel,

exclaiming with great joy when **Mary** arrived to visit her ...

“How does this happen to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me?”

And **then adding,**

“Blessed are you who believed

that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

That **same acclamation** applies to all of us: *Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.*

We do believe ... thank God!

Yes, **thank God for your Christian faith. Not everyone has it.**

In fact **2/3 of the world** do not believe God has come to us in Jesus, the Lord of all!

But we do.

And as we prepare to celebrate the fulfillment of God's promise at **Christmas** ...

I hope you enter into this time ... **not as a day** ... but as **a season** ... thereby giving yourselves **many days** to contemplate the **great mystery** of God coming to be with us.

Our celebration should mirror that of **newly married couples**.

For, after they've completed **much preparation** for their **Wedding Day**, they **then** take a one or two week **Honeymoon** to revel in their new **state in life** ... of being **husband and wife**.

We Catholics do the same thing with **Christmas**.

We prepare for Christmas for the 4 weeks of **Advent**,

then we celebrate the **Nativity of Jesus on Christmas Day**, **December 25th** and **then** we continue that celebration for a good two weeks more.

Don't let society tell you **when Christmas is over**; listen to your Church.

The **Church** tells us to **take our time** and **savor** the **magnificent mystery** that took place in our world at Christmas: that **God came to be with us ... just as He promised**.

This is really Good News and **the Church** wants us to soak it in for all it's worth. The **17 days** that comprise the **Christmas Season**, are intended to be days to just bask in the wonder of all that happened on that very First Christmas ... 2015 years ago!

It was **on that day** that the **Savior of Mankind** was born into our world.

It was **on that day** that the **Second Person of the Blessed Trinity** took on human form and came to dwell among us.

It was **on that day** the **Angels sang**, "*Peace on earth ... good will to men!*"

This Christmas, let's follow the direction of the Church ...

keeping the **next 5 days** as days of preparation ... with Prayer and Confession,

and then **savoring** the wonder of Christmas for the **whole Christmas Season**, for **all 17 days** ... honoring the Holy Family, the Epiphany and the Baptism of the Lord on January 10th.

Hopefully there will never be a time when you say,

"Enough of this ... I've had it with Christmas ... let's move on."

There's **really no where else** we need to go. Celebrating Jesus should never end.

He is the **first & the last**; the **beginning & the end**. He is **our Eternal Celebration!**