

## Column

I once heard a woman use the expression, “As flat as the day after Christmas.” She was referring to the let-down that is felt when an event, the expectation of which has been building for some time, suddenly comes and is over. This sentiment is understandable, but how can this let-down be avoided?

In some English-speaking countries the day after Christmas is called Boxing Day. It has acquired this name because people, at least in years past, gave those who served them throughout the year a box of nice things on this day. Recipients might include such people as the postman, the baker and the one who takes away the trash. Well, can you think of someone who make your life easier? Why not surprise this person with a ‘box’?

If not this, look for an opportunity on Boxing Day to do an unexpected, random act of kindness. Pray that God will open your eyes to a certain need or opportunity. When He does, go for it!

Another suggestion for avoiding the holiday blues is to mark the three commemorations that immediately follow Christmas Day in the Church Calendar: St. Stephen on Dec. 26, St. John on Dec. 27, and Holy Innocents on Dec. 28.

St. Stephen was the first Christian martyred. He was stoned to death after preaching a powerful sermon in which he showed that Jesus was in fact the One anticipated and foretold in the ancient Scriptures.

One person who was part of Stephen's lynch mob was Saul, a man we know better as St. Paul. No doubt, Stephen's steadfastness under fire and the prayer he offered as rocks were hurled in his direction made a lasting impression on Paul and led – at least indirectly – to his later conversion.

Stephen reminds us that following Jesus can be costly. The cosy scenes on Christmas cards do not tell the full story. Many even today put their life on the line when they give their allegiance to the King born in Bethlehem's manger.

On the 26<sup>th</sup>, pray for persecuted Christians around the world. Find out what is going on with

them from such organizations as Barnabas Aid ([barnabasfund.org/us/](http://barnabasfund.org/us/)) and resolve to give whatever assistance you can.

On the following day – Dec. 27 – the focus shifts to John the Apostle and writer of the fourth Gospel. John also reminds us that following Jesus can be costly, though with a difference. Instead of dying for Christ, John served Christ faithfully over the course of many years. Tradition says he lived to a ripe old age.

Which is easier: to make one great stand for Christ as Stephen did or to live for Him over the course of a lifetime as John did? I don't know. What is clear, our common calling is to be fearless and faithful. Pray for both in your own life.

On Dec. 28, the spotlight turns a third time. Now the light is shined onto the Holy Innocents, those children killed in Bethlehem at the command of King Herod (Matthew 2:13-18). They remind us that children often get in the crossfire of adult schemes and evil acts. On this day, pray for abused children and those who advocate for them. Resolve to do what you can to address this world-wide problem.

Down in the dumps because Christmas is past? Don't be. There is a world out there to be claimed for Christ. Exciting work remains to be done. The birth of Christ is only the beginning.

*ALMIGHTY God, who hast given us thy only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure virgin: Grant that we being regenerate, and made thy children by adoption and grace. may daily be renewed by thy Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who liveth and reigneth with thee and the same Spirit ever, one God, world without end. Amen.*

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