

One of my favorite Christmas movies is *National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation* starring Chevy Chase. If you've never seen it, it's a ridiculous, hilarious Christmas comedy classic that's centered on a family man named Clark Griswold (Chevy Chase) whose only desire is to have the best possible family Christmas. When Clark's parents and extended family arrive for the holiday, dysfunction and hilarity ensue.

One of my favorite scenes is when Clark is trying to show off to the family all of the Christmas lights he used to decorate his home, and let's just say Clark used a lot of lights. At first, after much anticipation, the lights don't work and so Clark tries everything to get them to work. Well later, through the actions of other characters, the *Christmas lights go on*: Clark is ecstatic, the neighbors are blinded by the brightness of the lights and infuriated as a result, the power for the surrounding city goes out and is then rebooted by an auxiliary nuclear reactor, and the whole family celebrates in joy!

It's one of the best scenes of the movie and it calls to mind our society's love for the beauty of Christmas lights. But what do Christmas lights actually symbolize? Christmas lights, whether they're on our trees

or homes, remind us of the *true meaning of Christmas!* The most important Reality that Christmas lights represent is our *Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the Light of the World!*

Christ is the Light Who dispels the darkness of our minds and hearts and conquers the darkness in our world—the darkness of sin, suffering, death! He is the saving Light Who guides our steps in the midst of the world’s darkness—the darkness of hatred, relativism, confusion, lust, greed, and selfishness. *Christ our Savior is the Supreme Christmas Light, from Whom all Christmas lights derive their radiant meaning!* In the Gospel of John, our Lord Jesus emphatically declares, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Brothers and sisters, I don’t care how corny or cliché this sounds, but our *Lord Jesus Christ, the Light of the World, is the Reason for the Season!* While gift-giving is obviously *not* intrinsically evil, Christmas is *not* about consumerism and getting as many new material things as we can! Even Clark Griswold at the end of *Christmas Vacation* affirms this central truth about Christmas! *Christmas is about our Lord Jesus*

Christ, the Son of the Living God, *the Light of the World*, Who was born so that we could be reborn in Him and share in the divine life of the Trinity! Christmas is about the birth of a tiny baby who was destined to save humanity from the evil of sin and death. The powers of Hell trembled at the birth of this child because this precious baby is the long-awaited Messiah, the Christ! ***This isn't some fictional fairy-tale that was invented to make us all nice people!*** This is the greatest and most consequential birth in human history, one that would further elevate the dignity of the human person, who possesses infinite value and worth!

Brothers and sisters, in all honesty, any attempt to downplay or obscure the true meaning of Christmas is sinister. Again, please don't misunderstand me, gift-giving is a wonderful Christmas tradition that's rooted in love and generosity. At the same time, we must ***always remember*** that no material thing under our Christmas tree is ever going to ***permanently*** and ***perfectly satisfy us!*** No material thing under our Christmas tree is ever going to give us the ***perfect happiness, love, and peace that we naturally desire as human beings.*** No material thing

under our Christmas tree is going to give us eternal life and save us from our sins and from death itself.

No, there is *only one Gift* Who can satisfy the deepest desires of our heart and give us the perfect happiness, love, and peace that we naturally desire as human beings. There is *only one Gift* Who can bestow upon us the treasure of divine life and the glory of eternity.

There is *only one Gift* Who can save us from our sins and from death itself, and that is the Baby Whose birth we celebrate tonight—our Lord Jesus Christ, Who *is the greatest Gift we could ever receive!*

May we always remain close to Christ our Savior and welcome the Light of the World into our hearts! If we stay close to Christ our Light through prayer and the Sacraments, most especially the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, then we will discover that *our Savior is the Gift that keeps on giving and that there is nothing greater!*

In a few moments, we will worship and receive the Christ Child, the Light of the World, *truly present* in the Most Holy Eucharist. As we prepare to adore Christ our Light in this most mysterious and awesome

Sacrament, I want to close with a beautiful prayer composed by St. John Paul II, who recited this prayer during his Christmas homily in 2003:

“O Child, who willed to have for your crib a manger; O Creator of the universe, who stripped yourself of divine glory; O Redeemer, who offered your vulnerable body in sacrifice for the salvation of humanity!

May the radiance of your birth light up the night of the world. May the power of your message of love thwart the proud snares of the evil one. May the gift of Your life make us understand ever more clearly the worth of the *life of each human being*. Too much blood is still being shed on the earth! Too much violence and too many conflicts trouble the peaceful coexistence of nations! You come to bring us peace. You are our peace! You alone can make of us “a people purified” and belonging to you forever, a people “zealous for good deeds” (Tit 2:14).

For to us a Child is born, to us a son is given! What an unfathomable mystery is hidden in the humility of this Child!...we would like to embrace him. You, Mary, who keep watch over your all-powerful Son, grant us your eyes to contemplate him with faith; grant us

your heart to worship him with love. In his simplicity, the Child of Bethlehem teaches us to rediscover the real meaning of our existence; he teaches us “to live sober, upright and Godly lives in this world” (Tit 2:12).

O Holy Night, so long awaited, which has united God and man forever! You rekindle our hope. You fill us with ecstatic wonder. You assure us of the triumph of love over hatred, of life over death. For this reason we remain absorbed in prayer. In the luminous silence of your Nativity, You, Emmanuel, continue to speak to us. And we are ready to listen to you. Amen!”