

## A Christmas Message and Blessing from Fr Thomas Keating.

(Transcript from Audio message)

This is Fr. Thomas wishing you all, on this wonderful season, the graces of peace and deeper understanding of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, but most of all into our lives.

Let's take just a quick look at a way of trying to understand what the gift of Christmas really is, in other words what is the primary grace of the feast of Christmas?

I think the answer is in a somewhat unexpected place and that's in the story of the Magi.

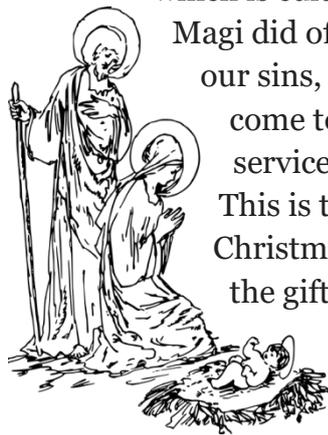
And so what prompted the Magi to come from virtually nowhere (coming from the east in the Hebrew is another little hint that this refers to a spiritual experience), and so I think we can say that the Magi had within them as a gift this anointing of the Spirit that we receive through the graces of this time and especially in the sacraments but also in contemplative prayer.

Centering Prayer is designed to bring us into this state gradually in which we realize inwardly that we're looking for something more than ourselves or more than this world can offer, more than this world can even hinder, and that is the conviction of faith and experience that God dwells within us, and when that awareness grows, then we awaken to the presence of God within us, and it gives the capacity to perceive God present in others.

So the grace of Christmas then, it seems to me, is the awakening within us, the realization or the deepening of faith, that the presence that we experience at times, and sometimes a lot of the time, if we're advancing in the Centering Prayer practice,

which is cultivating silence and interior freedom, we recognize like the Magi did of the infant. In spite of our fragility, our weaknesses and even our sins, we recognize the power of the divine presence in us that is come to heal us and to manifest the divine love by the ultimate service of the sacrifice of one's life in the service of others.

This is the time to open ourselves beyond the appearances of Christmas or even the rituals of Christmas to the spirit and depth of the gift of God that these rituals manifest or invite us into.



And so it's that grace that I pray that each of us might experience an enormous increase in, so that we may then perceive in others this divine presence even where it's

completely unexpected and hidden and secret.

So, I wish you then this grace and you already have it! So I send you whatever spiritual energy I have and thank you for pursuing this journey.

I'll always be thinking of you and inviting you into the presence of the Spirit that comes to each of us as a free gift and a true security and the true love and the true freedom.