

Dancing With The Star

You know the TV program - "Dancing with the stars." Partners who once knew little about each other, now team up in order to win the big prize – to be known as the best dancers in the US. A star– either a famous actor, actress, or some known person, is teamed with a professional dancer. First, they go through grueling practices. They work so hard that sometimes they even get injured. They learn all the intricate steps. Finally, they dance on TV. Then they're voted upon. Sometimes they're not rewarded for the best dancing. The judges know what is good dancing. But the audience is fickle; they think it's a popularity contest. Now, it seems to me that it's unfair. You'd think that in a contest like this, you should be rewarded for how you PERFORM, and not for who you ARE! Nevertheless, the contestants put up with all the inconsistencies – because they want to win the big prize. So, if you're not VOTED in - too bad; you're out of luck! At least they got a chance to dance with a star.

Dancing with the stars – what a dream for many people. It's a popular program – so, possibly it's likely that maybe you would even like to dance with a star - if you had the chance.

Now, here's where we get to the heart of the matter. This Christmas, I'd like to invite you to DANCE, to be happy, to be childlike – to DANCE WITH THE STAR. Christmas is the time of year when we have the chance to follow our dreams. Dance with the STAR. First, the Bethlehem Star.

Some historians have written that the star that led the shepherds, and ultimately the magi, to the Christ child actually seemed like it was DANCING. Obviously, there was something special about it.

That star was the instrument that led the *simple people*, the shepherds; it led the *learned*, the wise men, to the manger; and now it still leads all people, all

of us, to that wonderful and fabled mystery of a special Child being born – a Child who makes you want to DANCE – a Child who helps you forget sadness and misery; a Child who helps you to *be* like a child.

But, in order to become like a child, first we must be willing to dance. Now, instead of registering, and entering our name into a contest, we have something different here. There is *no* contest. We're **all** entered – by the fact that God made us His children. Plus, there's NO VOTING by others. Jesus has already cast His ballot. Jesus sees who you ARE – and He lets you participate. He tells us, “You are mine. You are precious to Me. You are already a winner! You have come to visit Me today. You have come to honor me. I love you, no matter what turns your life has taken; no matter what choices you have made. I just ask for your heart. I ask you to give the gift of yourself to me. If you need to, turn your life around. And I'll teach you *how*.”

You are here at this Mass because you followed the STAR. You became introduced to the STAR a while back - first at your baptism, then at your Communion, and then at your confirmation. You began to dance, and you *kept following* the STAR. At first, you weren't sure where it would take you. But you had a lot of special STARS around you that gave you confidence. Your parents, your relatives, your friends, your teachers told you that it was OK to dance; it was right to step out and believe in **what is not seen**.

You continued your journey. There were, and still are, a lot of difficulties - long stretches of desert (like the Magi experienced), and fortunately, quite a few refreshing oases along the way. Often you wondered: "Where is this journey taking me?" Yet, despite all your ups and downs, you're still following that STAR. You're still dancing.

Where has the star led you? It's led you here – to THE STAR – Jesus Himself. And He's saying to you: "May I have this dance?" You know, dancing is one way to begin to let go of your inhibitions, your fears. Now, it's rare that I dance. I pretty much think that I'll make a fool of myself; so, I just don't do it. Besides, my coordination is terrible. On those few occasions that I have danced, I just threw caution to the wind! It was at the ordination reception of a priest friend in Massachusetts. I let go - and it didn't matter what I looked like, or how silly I felt. The polka music took me over, and I literally flew around the floor. And you know what? It was FREEING!

To me, that's what it's like to dance with the STAR!

And Jesus says: "Don't be afraid, especially if you think you're going to make a mistake. I'll lead. Just follow me." **And, boy, does He know the steps! They're the best!** He says: "Walk in my footsteps. Even if you have some pain and frustration, I'll show you the way. Your burden will be light, because I am yoked with you. I bear so much of your burdens. And so, **you are trained - by the Master choreographer Himself.**

What does it take to be successful? Just like the TV program - practice, practice, practice. If you slip and fall. Don't worry. You won't sprain your ankle. Jesus won't allow that. He'll just pick you up and you'll start all over again.

And what's the PRIZE? Happiness. Eternal life. Inner peace.

My Christmas wish for you is this: Follow your STAR. And when Jesus asks you: "May I have this dance?" Just say: "**Yes! Yes! Yes!**"