

Today as we begin, as a moment of reflection I want to share some thoughts on a powerful poem by Howard Thurman titled "The Work of Christmas." With the holidays just behind us, we oftentimes, and all-to-quickly, leave the memories and the significance of Christmas behind. This poem offers us a challenge us to think beyond the holiday season and reflect on the roles we play in making the world a better place.

As we listen to, think about and reflect on this poem let us be mindful how our participation on the Pope John Paul II Award and the activities we are undertaking are us living the spirit of the poem:

"The Work of Christmas"

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flock,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost,
To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among others,
To make music in the heart.

-Howard Thurman

****Understanding the Poem:****

Howard Thurman was an influential theologian, and his poem emphasises that the true work begins after the festive lights are turned off and the carols have ended. Here's what it means:

1. **Beyond the Celebration:**

- The poem begins by reminding us that Christmas is not just about celebration. It's about taking the spirit of love, joy, and peace – signified in the birth of Christ - into our everyday lives.

2. **Our Role:**

- Thurman lists actions that signify the true essence of Christmas: finding the lost, healing the broken, feeding the hungry, releasing prisoners, rebuilding nations, bringing peace, and making music in the heart. These are actions that we can all strive to incorporate into our lives.

****Applying the Message:****

Let's think about how we can apply these messages in our own lives:

1. ****Acts of Kindness:****

- Small acts of kindness can have a huge impact. Whether it's helping a friend who's feeling down, volunteering, or simply being more considerate, these actions contribute to the real work of Christmas.

2. ****Community Engagement:****

- Being part of your community is crucial. Consider contributing to local charities, joining community service groups, or participating in activities that bring people together and foster unity.

3. ****Personal Reflection:****

- Reflect on personal growth. Identify areas where you can improve and ways to contribute positively to the world around you. Self-improvement is a continuous journey that aligns with the work described in the poem.

4. ****Advocating for Change:****

- Use your voice to stand up for causes that matter to you. Whether it's environmental issues, social justice, or equality, every step towards change is part of the ongoing work Thurman refers to.

****Conclusion:****

To conclude, "The Work of Christmas" challenges us to embody the virtues of Christmas throughout the year. It calls on us to transform the spirit of celebration into actions that heal and uplift our communities.