

in dialogue with Gabriel, and gave a thoughtful answer that one would not make without considering the invitation. Mary made sure of her response.

Yet another idea is to be intentional in our gift giving by offering unique gifts that support important Catholic apostolates while having meaning to the recipient. Consider giving products made by Catholic religious communities, of which there is great diversity of items from coffee to confections. Or make gifts which support Catholic organizations in honor of friends and families. When we take the time to think about what we give, we can make sure it is in the true spirit of Christmas.

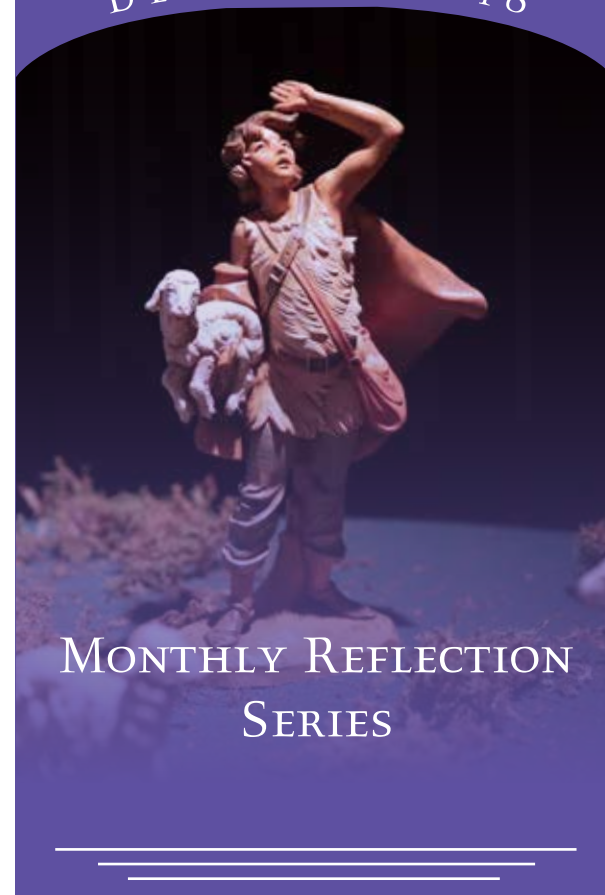
There is truth in the proverb, Rushing is not important, making sure is, but that truth is made more real for us during this time of year by the gift of our faith, and the gift of the Church. Just as God makes sure his mercy and love is with us always, let us make sure we give him worthy attention.

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## MONTHLY REFLECTION SERIES

### Did I Miss the True Meaning of Christmas?

by Fr. Leonard Olobo, C.S.C.

In my home and native land of Uganda, storytelling and proverbs are common methods of conveying important moral truths and life lessons. In many regards, I think this unique tradition contributes to the spread of the Gospel in Africa as the Good News is filled with rich stories of truth and wisdom much like the stories that have passed from generation to generation, and that I and many others heard throughout childhood. The exception, of course, is that these traditional Ugandan stories don't carry the words of everlasting life like the Gospels.



Although I am in Africa now, I once worked in the U.S. as the Director of the Holy Cross Mission Center at Notre Dame. I arrived in America in October 2010 just as the cold, and surprisingly, the Christmas Season were already settling in. It didn't take long to be exposed to the many messages of Christmas in stores, in the newspaper, and in radio and on television. This was all foreign to me.

I noticed with all the messages for shopping and spending money that the lives of many people seemed to speed up as well. Hurry here, hurry there. So many days left to shop, so many parties to attend, so much to do with limited time and money. It left my head spinning!

But it also brought to my mind a notable East African proverb: Rushing is not important, making sure is.

These words have an important message for us, particularly relevant in the month of December when rushing seems to define much of our activity; when it becomes easy for even the most dedicated Christian to forget Advent traditions and devotions because of the hype of the Christmas season.

Getting wrapped up in the hectic pace can take us off course, and before we know it, it's Christmas day and the gifts are opened, the food is prepared and served, and then we begin to wonder. Is this what Christmas means? Was all the rushing worth it? In all the frantic preparations, what did I miss of the true meaning of Christmas?

This is where the part of the proverb, making sure is, can help us because it reminds us to pay attention. It calls us to focus on what it is we're doing and why, and not just toward getting something done.

What can we do to guard against the secularism of the season and keep our

energies where God calls them to be, to make sure our attention is in the right place? I offer a few ideas that may help.

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**“ Rushing is not important, making sure is. ”**

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The Catholic Church, in her great wisdom and tradition, gives us the gift of Advent, the time in which we prepare ourselves worthily to celebrate the anniversary of the Lord's coming into the world as the incarnate God of Love. We have wonderful resources to help us keep focused on the intent of Christmas, from Advent calendars, the Advent wreath, books of daily reflection, and, of course, the scriptures and prayers of the Mass throughout the season calling us to the present and inviting us into a deeper unity with the incarnate Christ. Drawing upon any or all of these resources will help us make sure our activity during this season is focused on the right end.

I'd also suggest keeping present this word, fiat. It is Mary's "yes" to God through the angel Gabriel, and it's one of the most powerful reminders of the call of Advent to pause and focus our attention. You recall the story from the Gospel of Luke. Mary's "yes" wasn't in haste. Mary did not rush to answer. She relied on her faith in God, engaged