

***Christmas Eve Service***  
***December 24, 2014***  
***Sermon By: Roy G. Pollina †***

I visited the CVS looking to buy Christmas cards and I was having a difficult time finding the kind of card I wanted. Given my inclination and vocation I wanted religious themed Christmas cards. There were Santa Claus cards, snowflake cards, Christmas tree cards, silver bells cards, horse pulling sleigh cards, reindeer pulling a sleigh cards, elves making toys cards, but religious cards seemed non-existent. Finally, I started to get close to what I was looking for; I found a card with a smiling snowman and above him was printed, in increasing size and boldness, the word – *Believe – Believe – Believe*. I flipped the card open to see what pious message our happy snowman might have concerning belief in the wondrous gift of the Christ child. Sadly, the snowman let me down. The inside of the card encouraged me to: *Believe in the magic of the season!* I did not even get a nod by way of acknowledging the season as being Christmas.

Given my inclination and vocation, I may be oversensitive about such things but...if there is one thing we are not celebrating today; it is anything having to do with magic. Tonight we celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Son of Mary.

As a man who stayed in the delivery room to witness the birth of our first born, I can tell you from experience that there are few things more natural and less magical than childbirth. My

experience informs me that there was little of pixie dust, flashes of rainbows or dancing daffodils at the birth of a child. I am sure Jesus was born amidst bodily fluids and tissue and the sharp cries of his mother. Hardly, the stuff of Magic... the birth of a human baby.

I will concede that there is something miraculous in this birth, but that is not the same as magic.

Now would be a good time to clarify my terms. Magic -- when we are not talking about the entertainment slight-of-hand or misdirection -- Magic is the human control of supernatural agencies or forces of nature by incantation or technique. Those of you familiar with the story of the sorcerer's apprentice will know that the control part of human control of magic is not guaranteed. If, in fact, anything like magic existed, which it does not.

This is quite different from miracle defined as an effect or event manifesting or considered as a work of God. Miracles are very real.

Despite the testimony of CVS Christmas cards, there is no magic in the Christmas season or any other season. Humans have never had any control over the supernatural or the forces of nature. God, on the other hand, manifests His power and presence in the universe created by Him in regular and, well, miraculous ways.

The fact that there is something rather than nothing has to be among the first miracles. The fact that some of that stuff

began to live is another miracle. That some of those living creatures became aware that they were aware and began to wonder what they ought to do, may be the greatest miracle – human beings. Sadly, these beings that, more than any other creature, manifested the very good work of God, chose to do things that were destructive of God’s image and likeness bestowed upon them. We suffered mightily for the poor, willful, destructive, sinful choices we made. We were in a death spiral. We found we were powerless to save ourselves from ourselves. We tried, but there was no magic in wealth, no magic in sex, no magic in drugs, no magic in power and no magic in economic systems or political systems. Armies could not save, commercialism could not save, science could not save, and ideology could not save. There was nothing magical about anything we tried. It would be a Miracle if we could be saved!

So, Mary, exhausted and sore from child birth took her first born son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger. Nothing more natural than childbirth except that this child was conceived as the ultimate manifestation of God, for this babe is the Son of God.

This day is *MIRACLE* written large. When asked if God answers prayers, you can answer that you know that God answers prayers. When pushed about how you can be so positive that God answers prayers, give this one word answer: “Christmas”.

On a chilly night, in a tiny village, in a stable behind a crowded inn God

answered every prayer ever offered with the birth of a child. The Christ child was born with one purpose in life – to be our Savior. You pray that God will do for you those things you cannot do for yourself. You pray that your sins will be taken away. You pray that good will triumph over evil. You pray that suffering will be redeemed. You pray that death is not the end for you and for those you love. The answer to all of your prayers begins with the birth of Jesus.

So I say to you, stealing shamelessly from a Christmas card, *Believe – Believe – Believe.*

That this night all of your prayers are answered in the miraculously natural birth of the one who is the Son of God, a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

Merry Christmas.

**Amen.**