

RUMBLINGS FROM THE BUNKER

CHRISTMAS RECIPE

Well the mince pie season is in full swing and I am delighted, though I must confess I find the mince pie is getting more and more like the sausage: it is quite difficult to get a really good one. Actually come to think of it the sausage is worse. Unfortunately more often than not I am disappointed in the sausage. Too much fat, too much water, way too much salt, poor quality and sadly often pretty tasteless. That's the sausage. Don't get me started on Caramel shortbread! I am more or less resigned now that no one will ever make it quite like Bridie! In fairness, the mince pie is not so bad and in my experience they are generally at least passable. Whether it's heated with fresh cream or brandy butter or simply unheated with a cup of tea, it is an important little seasonal ritual. What else is a significant part of the season?

Well I love snow. I pray for snow. Like Bing I'm always dreaming of a White Christmas. I am smiling at that because it reminds me of when Bridie got old and I'd say I am praying for snow and she would say you're not thinking of people like me afraid to go out in it for fear of falling. Yea I am smiling but tears are not far away. Do you ever stop missing your Ma? I miss her all the time but I think I miss her more at Christmas. I like Andy Williams Christmas Songs. I really like Michael Bubl  singing 'It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas'! Surprise, surprise! I love the smell of the turkey and ham, especially the ham cooking in the oven, and it covered in brown sugar and cloves. I love a good Christmas movie. I always read some Dickens at Christmas, and usually some of John B. Keane's Christmas stories. So there you are, that's Christmas for me! Have a good one! Happy Holiday!!

WAIT! HANG ON! Hold it right there! Just a minute! I am joking you know! Imagine if that is all there was to Christmas for me! When I start wishing you Happy Holiday, it will be time to ring the Archbishop and explain I seem to be slipping! I'd be a right pagan. A PPP.... A pagan parish priest! Actually if that is all there was to Christmas for me, it would be very sad. Now to what really makes Christmas for me:

Let me begin with the big 'no-no'. I wish people would stop saying: 'sure Christmas is just for the kids' It most certainly is not. What a tired and weary thing to say. I am sure it is not intentional but it has more than a little cynicism in it and in my view it is definitely a pagan statement. Is hope just for children? Is joy? Is the Christmas Story just for children? At what stage do we stop looking into the Crib? So let us, at least those of us trying to hang on to some semblance of faith, stop this negative cant.

Christmas for me is the beautiful passages of Sacred Scripture such as Isaiah, the Masses, the young children dropping into see the crib with their parents on Christmas Eve afternoon, Midnight Mass and the Christmas Day Mass. They all have their tone or tenor, unique to themselves, but they are all Mass. The greatest prayer on this earth, and to be celebrating it at Christmas recalling the Birth of Jesus. Wow! How Beautiful!

Christmas for me is O Holy Night and Adeste Fideles and above all Silent Night, and if we can sing at least a little of it in its original German then all the better. Christmas for me is the Crib! I try to visit some cribs around the city, a direct result of the days my Dad brought the four of us children around many of the church cribs in Belfast.

At the very core of it for me will be the chance to do a little bit of soul work. I'll be very disappointed in myself if by the time I am on the altar for Mass on New Year's Eve night at 11.30 pm eagerly welcoming the gift that is 2026, that I have not, at least glimpsed, Jesus over Christmas and got to know him even a tiny bit better. Indeed that's my prayer for you and yours!

Fraternally, JoeMcD 21.12.25