

Christmas message 2021

Dear sisters and brothers,

“...you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.” — 2 Corinthians 8:9

The Christmas story fascinates, intrigues and challenges.

It is a fascinating story, among other reasons, because the revelation of what God has graciously done in Christ for the renewal of the whole creation comes to us through narratives in which the main actors are not the powerful living in palaces, but the humble living in the margins.

Think of the Christmas stories from the gospels of Matthew and Luke. What comes to mind? A modest couple facing difficulties; a vulnerable child threatened by the cruelty of a king; a pregnant woman who does not find a hotel room to give birth; anonymous shepherds who receive good news from a crowd of angels; a young family pushed to migration.

All of them are on the underside of history. All of them are the bearers of the divine promise about the final destination of history.

What Mary celebrated in the spirit of the Hebrew prophets, by singing that her saviour had “brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly,” the apostle Paul formulates in terms of the self-emptying of the Son of God, who became poor “for us and for our salvation,” as expressed later in the words of the Nicene Creed.

The Christmas story and its fascinating paradox invite us to meditate about Christian life in today’s world. Preaching in Constantinople about the second letter to the Corinthians, Saint John Chrysostom spoke of two altars in Christian life, which are inseparable from each other: the altar of Holy Communion and the altar of compassion. We cannot receive the Heavenly Bread without engaging in active solidarity, in “the liturgy after the liturgy”, with those who cannot receive the earthly bread.

Ours are times in which the pandemic has catalysed the risks of the climate emergency, the systemic inequalities between rich and poor, and widespread gender-based violence.

As we prepare ourselves to welcome the One who manifested the God of the widow, the foreigner and the orphan, let not our minds conform to the spirit of greed of our times. Let us repent and convert to new ways of living that express our care for future generations. Let Christ’s love move the world to reconciliation and unity.

May your Christmas be blessed and its message of joy and hope overwhelm your lives. Christ is born, let us glorify him!



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