

FROM THE SERVANT GENERAL
THE COMING OF THE SAVIOR

“And the Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us”
(John 1:14a)

December 25, 2008

My beloved brethren in Christ,

“Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For today in the city of David a savior has been born for you who is Messiah and Lord.” (Lk 2:10-11). Thus did the angel of the Lord proclaim to the shepherds the birth of Jesus.

“And suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: ‘Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.’” (Lk 2:13-14). Heaven burst out in joyful celebration and worship. Indeed, it was the most momentous moment in all history, when God came into the world as a human baby, to usher in the start of the life and work of the Savior of the world.

Today we Christians celebrate Christmas. Despite problems and woes, we manage to be joyful. Despite antagonisms and conflicts, we manage to wish goodwill to others. Despite tragedies and injustice, we manage, even for just a moment, to feel peace within us.

But what will the new year bring? In a week’s time, will the peace and joy of Christmas already be a thing of the past, something that was briefly enjoyed in the year that has gone?

It does not have to be that way. The angel talked of not being afraid, of good news, of great joy, of the universality of the good news.

The birth of Jesus is good news. It is the greatest news ever. A Savior has been born. We will be redeemed from sin and darkness. Our lives can be turned totally around, for the better.

This great news is for all. For even the vilest of sinners. Nay, precisely for the vilest of sinners. No one is to be excluded from the grace and blessing of God.

And so all should rejoice. Salvation, transformation, renewal, deliverance, grace upon grace, fullness of life—all these are within reach. And God desires for all to have them.

So we should no longer be afraid. No matter what our situation in life, no matter how deep in the pit we are at the moment, we can confidently look forward to God’s action on our behalf. And if God is for us, who can be against us? We can move on with our lives with confidence and trust.

But after two millennia, why is the world, already lighted up by the birth of the Savior, still in darkness, in conflict, and unhappy?

It is because we have not done our part. What then must we do? First, we must allow Jesus to be born in our very own hearts. We must be personally transformed in Christ, and live out our lives according to the ways of the Savior. We must grow in holiness.

Second, we must allow Jesus to be born in our homes. We must build a family for Christ, and live in a home inhabited as well by the Holy Spirit. In our home, all will be formed with truly Christian values.

Finally, we must work such that Jesus is born in every other heart as well. We must do the work of evangelization. We must proclaim Christ to the whole world. Jesus depends on us! To proclaim this good news, this salvation in Jesus, this reign of Jesus in our lives, this coming of peace into the world—this task is our privilege and our responsibility. When we do so, the heavenly host will again burst out with exultant joy. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings glad tidings, announcing peace, bearing good news, announcing salvation, and saying to Zion, ‘Your God is King!’” (Is 52:7).

Let us shout for joy for the Lord restores us, and let us break out in song for the Lord redeems us (Is 52:8-9). Let us live such that Jesus becomes incarnate in our lives and makes his dwelling among us. And let us work such that “all the ends of the earth will behold the salvation of our God.” (Is 52:10b).

This is what Christmas means. That is how Christmas will remain in people’s hearts and lives, long after the festive celebrations have ceased.

Have a blessed Christmas.

Your brother and servant,

Frank Padilla