

## **Christmas 2018**

### **My Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

In Africa, a story is told of a boy called Amazu, who was always very curious. One day he asked, “What language does God speak?” But no one could answer him. He traveled all over his country questioning everyone but could not get a satisfactory answer. Eventually he set out for distant lands on his quest. For a long time he had no success.

At length, he came one night to a village called Bethlehem, and as there was no room in the local inn, he went outside the village in search of shelter for the night. At last he came to a cave and found there a couple and a baby also occupied it. He was about to turn away when the young mother spoke, “Welcome Amazu, we have been waiting for you.”

The boy amazed that the woman knew his name, was even more amazed when she said, “For a long time you have been searching the world over to find out what language God speaks. Well, now your journey is over. Tonight you can see with your own eyes the language God speaks. He speaks the language of love.”

And so each Christmas we contemplate the mystery of our God who became man. He is born in silence, poverty, simplicity and purity in Bethlehem, the house of bread.

Our God made man later taking bread and wine transforms it into his body and blood; thus is the mystery of his Incarnation continued for us in the mystery of the Eucharist, God made real for us. God becomes man.

Each time we come to the Eucharist, we come to a new Bethlehem. He, who rested once in a manger, now rests in our entire being, as we receive him in the mystery of the Mass.

Long ago, in Persia, there was a wise and good king who loved his people. He wanted to know how they lived, and he wanted particularly to know about their

hardships. Often dressed in the clothes of a worker or a beggar, he visited the homes of the poor. No one whom he visited even thought he might be their king.

Once he visited a very poor man. He ate the coarse food the poor man ate, and he spoke cheerful, kind words to him. Then he left.

Later when he visited the poor man again, he disclosed his identity saying, “I am your king!” Then the king thought the man would surely ask for some gift or favor, but he did not. Instead, he said, “You left your palace and your glory to visit me in this dark, dreary place. You ate the coarse food I ate. You brought gladness to my heart! To others you have given your rich gifts. To me you have given yourself!”

This is the true meaning of Christmas. The second person of the Blessed Trinity becomes incarnate. Jesus is true God and true man. He is one person with two natures, a divine nature and a human nature.

Had our greatest need been knowledge, God would have sent us an educator. Had that greatest need been technology, God would have sent us a scientist. Had our greatest need been for money, God would have sent us an economist. Had our greatest need been for pleasure, God would have sent us an entertainer. But, because our greatest need was for redemption from sin, God sent us a Savior.

By becoming man, God has in a certain way united Himself with every human person. He has revealed to us the truth about who He is – He is Love. He has revealed to us also that every human being has dignity, including the unborn child, the poor, the outcast, the suffering, and the dying. By becoming man, God came to earth to deliver us from sin and death. He came to make all things new; to bring about the new creation. He took on our human nature so that we might become partakers of His divine nature, that we become sharers in the life of the Blessed Trinity. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church speak of the Christmas mystery as “a wonderful exchange” between God and man: He takes what is ours so that He

may give us what is His. In sending His Son, God has opened for us a share in His divine life, the power, Saint John says, to become children of God!

Christmas is all about the Savior who came to save us from sin. We need to open our minds and our hearts, and allow this Savior to possess our entire being.

As Pope Benedict wrote: “The birth of Christ challenges us to reassess our priorities, our values, our very way of life. While Christmas is undoubtedly a time of great joy, it is also an occasion for deep reflection, even an examination of conscience.”

At Christmas we do not gather to honor or to worship a powerful emperor. We gather to honor and to worship the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, the One announced by the angel as the Savior, who is Christ and Lord. We worship Him who gives meaning to our lives, who offers us eternal life and salvation.

**My Dear Brothers and Sisters,**

Whatever language we may speak as we contemplate the Christ child lying in the manger of Bethlehem, God speaks only one language and that language is the language of love.

In becoming man, He has brought eternity to us and so we live as a people of hope. This virtue of hope is truly a virtue of Christmas, a virtue that should distinguish our lives as followers of Jesus. In the midst of so much anxiety and despair in our world, may we be witnesses of Christian hope!

May Jesus, born in the silence of this night at Bethlehem, bless you and your loved ones with His love and peace!