

INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF CATHOLIC KNIGHTS



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CHRISTMAS MESSAGES

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM THE IACK PRESIDENT-2008

The grace and peace of the Incarnate Christ be with you all!

On the occasion of the celebration of Christmas this year, I would like to share a reflection on Christmas with all members of the International Alliance of Catholic Knights (IACK). This reflection centres on the relationship between Christmas and the incarnation, peace and sharing, with particular reference to personal resolve to build better friendships among member Orders of the International Alliance of Catholic Knights.

The proclamation of the angels which greeted the birth of Jesus Christ two thousands years ago and which we will hear re-echoing joyfully in this season is a message of hope which has been entrusted to us, Knights of our mother, the Catholic Church. We are the custodians of this simple but wondrous message of hope, which comes from the stable of Bethlehem: God loves all men and women on earth and gives them the hope of a new era, an era of peace. His love, fully revealed in the Incarnate Son, is the foundation of universal peace. When welcomed in the depths of the human heart, this love reconciles people with God and with themselves, renews human relationships and stirs that desire for brotherhood capable of banishing the temptations of violence and war. It is a simply wondrous message we need to hear again and again.

Christmas -a simple wonder, and its message comes in simple words. I guess that what makes it so wonderful -it is simple in its message, simple in its circumstances, simple in its characters. When we lose the wonder of this holy season, we lose it because we look in wrong directions. We seek its wonders in the beauty of our Christmas pageantry, decorations of lights, festivals of carols, in anything to complicate the celebration. We forget the simple manger and the simple swaddling cloths. But if we want a Christmas that is simply wonder-filled, that's where we have to look. And when we find the Christ child there, then our lights will glow much brighter and the Christmas music and songs will have a beauty we have never heard before.

We believe that on the night of Jesus' birth there were shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem, tending flocks. We do not ask to see the proof for this in the records of the county clerk at Bethlehem. We believe that in the dark Judean sky the glory of the Lord appeared and an angel sent from heaven told the shepherds of the Saviour's birth. We do not ask a psychological analysis of this phenomenon. We believe that in the eastern skies a special star appeared to guide the Wise Men to the newborn king. We do not have to ask the astronomers for explanations. We believe that Mary was a virgin and that the holy child is God's own Son, and that the science of obstetrics wouldn't know about such things. These are miracles - some call them fables. For St. Luke and for us they are facts.

But in the simplest, yet the greatest, wonder of them all, we believe that in the fullness of time, God fulfilled his promise and God came to earth and God became an infant human being to bear our guilt of sin and die our death for us and rise again to bring his life to us. He became a man and he identified himself with us so that through all eternity we can be identified with him.

And we dare not forget this wonder -the wonder that we believe it all! Because we do believe it because we believe him - Christmas is simply wonderful, and let us all be wonder-filled!

Knight Brothers, in our various faith journeys we believe in the midst of all that is happening we can see with our own eyes (though not always clearly) that the Lord God is creating a kingdom. We cannot always explain or understand "what is going on" except to this extent: "An Almighty God is governing all things, powerfully and gently, and in His own mysterious way is shaping up a kingdom of justice and of love. In this season we are celebrating that Jesus, Son of Mary, Mighty God and Lord of all Creation, has been born among us. As we celebrate his presence in and among us we need in the midst of all to remember his words to us: Do not be afraid. I am with you always.

The message convinces me it is possible to achieve inter and intra order friendships in the Alliance through sharing. We must recognise that in friendship greater Catholic action can be achieved collectively.

A recent visit to Mauritius by an IACK delegation made up of the President and Secretary General and wives, at the invitation of the Order in that country, demonstrates how greater friendships could be built by merely sharing resources. The experience of how the earlier Christians lived to support each other, as recounted in the Acts of the Apostles Chapter 2, bears further testimony. Let us therefore endeavour to use the message this Christmas to improve on inter and intra order friendships, and the Mother Church will be the beneficiary of greater Catholic action.

To all of you I extend my prayerful best wishes for a very happy and Spirit-filled Christmas.

Sam K. Barnes
PRESIDENT IACK

A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE
CHRISTMAS 2008
by
MOST REV. JOSEPH OSEI-BONSU
INTERNATIONAL CHAPLAIN
INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF CATHOLIC KNIGHTS

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as we get ready to celebrate the feast of Christmas this year, I would like to share the following thoughts on Christmas with all members of the International Alliance of Catholic Knights (IACK).

The Religious Dimension of Christmas

Our world today is characterized by secularism, and for many people Christmas is only an occasion for enjoying themselves and for family reunions. It does not seem to have any religious significance. But as Christians we should not lose sight of the religious dimension of Christmas, which marks the beginning of the process of mankind's salvation. Christ was born at Christmas so that at the appointed time he could die to bring salvation to humankind. The fundamental message of Christmas is the incarnation: God taking on human flesh, God becoming man (Jn. 1:1, 14). With the birth of Christ, God came to be with us not just in spirit but in the flesh. Therefore, as we celebrate Christmas, let us seek to strive after the divine and not limit ourselves to the merely human or the earthly. As St. Paul reminds us in Col. 3:12, "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth".

Christmas and Peace

As we celebrate the feast of Christmas, we should also reflect on peace, since Christmas celebrates the birth of Christ, the Prince of Peace. For us Christians, Christ is the prince of peace spoken of by the prophet Isaiah: "*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given..., and his name will be called 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'*" (Isaiah 9:6). Peace was also the message of the angels at the birth of Christ: "*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!*" (Lk. 2:14). Peace was also the parting message of the risen Christ. In John 14:27, Christ says, "*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you*".

However, peace remains elusive in our world. We live in a world beset by all kinds of problems, including wars, even in the birthplace of the Prince of Peace. We must, therefore, pray for and work towards the realization of peace in the world. We must pray that the vision of the Prophet Micah may be realized: "*...and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more*" (Micah 4:3).

But peace is not necessarily the absence of war. In many of our countries there is no war, and yet there is no peace. There are countries that are suffering from post-election violence and instability. There is no peace in our homes, no peace between brothers and sisters, between parents and children, between husbands and wives. As we celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace, we should

remember that there is the need for us to strive to make peace a reality in our lives and not a mere dream. The prophet Isaiah had a vision of a time to come when there would be peace between creatures naturally opposed to one another: *“The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den”* (Isaiah 11:6-8). This vision should be an inspiration for all of us to learn to live together.

Christmas as a Time of Sharing

Christmas is also a time of sharing. God loved the world so much that he gave his *only* son for us (John 3:16). We also have to learn to give to others. At Christmas time we like to give gifts to friends and relations. We send Christmas cards and all kinds of presents. Christmas is a reminder to us that we need to be very generous and share what we have with others. If God gave his only son to us, we should show generosity in our dealings with others. Let us try to show generosity during this Christmas season to all those who for one reason or another cannot enjoy themselves. Let us help the poor, the sick, the bedridden, those who are hospitalized and have to spend Christmas away from the comfort of their homes.

May Christ, the Prince of Peace, who brought joy during the first Christmas to Mary, Joseph, the shepherds and the angels, bring you joy and peace. May the coming year be filled with joy and peace for each and everyone of you as you endeavour to serve the Lord. May the joy of the first Christmas and of this Christmas be in your hearts always and may you forever share in the eternal peace of Christ, the Prince of Peace.

May I take this opportunity to join with our President and International Chaplain in wishing all of you, your families and friends a Peaceful and Happy Christmas and a Blessed New Year.

*Niall M. Kennedy KCSG
Secretary General*