

Christmas Message

At Christmas, I stand in bewilderment before the nativity scene. Here is the design of God for humanity to enter into a definitive relationship of intimacy with the Creator. The child born of the Virgin is Emmanuel, God-with-us (Mt 1:23).

From a human mind-set, I fail to fathom the depth, height, width, and length of the of God's love and wisdom in opting for a stable for the birth of the King of Kings. The "Word made flesh to dwell amidst us" (Jn 1:14) has rendered itself to the mercy of humans and nature! The cold night, the smell of the stable, the bite of insects and the inconvenient corner of the stable with the bleating sheep around smearing the floor with their muck. Wow! If human counsel were to be sought, we would have proposed better places for the divine child to be born. In Palestine, there was the palace of Herod the King or the home of the High Priest. Still better places would have been the palaces of the Caesar of Rome, or of the Han dynasty in China or of the Maharajas of India or of a Mayan Chief in the Americas. There were renowned queens such as Cleopatra of Egypt, Livia Drusilla of Rome, or one of the Maharanis of the East to give birth to the saviour of the world. Thinking of the power politics of the palaces and the intrigues of the royal households, I know there would not have been any place for love to take flesh in those places of vainglory. Many of these men and women in the heights of their power pretended and acted like God. Love would have been smothered to death in the first instance under human pride and arrogance. Mary and Joseph proved that God's choice was right.

Before me, in the little babe of the manger, I see the dream of God for humanity unfolding in a surprising way. It surpasses all human calculations and invites a paradigm shift in my thinking, feeling, and relating with fellow humans. In the babe of Bethlehem, God's embrace begins with those in the peripheries so that no one is outside his loving reach. Like the star that led the wise men to the child in the manger, the babe of Bethlehem would be the star to lead humans on the way to their true destiny, their true purpose of life.

Our world will be better only when the most vulnerable of humans and the care of our common home capture our attention and commitment. Paradoxically, we tend to be seduced by the lure of power and money and revolve around those who wield control over them. Thus, service positions and resources for the wellbeing of all are made into idols of worship, which cause division, dissension in society, and domination over humans and nature.

Christmas comes once again reminding us of the dream of God and inviting us to walk with the awareness that God *is* with us. In this Christmas, let us open our eyes to see reality

beyond the perspective of our safe enclosures. It makes a difference when we can look at the world through the eyes of our brothers and sisters who are discarded into the margins of society and despoiled of human dignity and the rightful share of the resources of nature. Love born in the heart will tell us what to do for the least of our brothers and sisters.

The Virgin Mother who gave flesh to the Word in her womb sang the song of a different vision of reality, her *Magnificat*. When our Founder saw the world through the eyes of Christ, his life took a different route, “the straight and secure path.” We can do the same in our life too.

I wish all my Claretian confreres, members of Claretian family, friends, colleagues and benefactors a very meaningful Christmas and grace-filled New year!

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