

Christmas Message 2006

I greet you all in this holy season of grace. I want to share once more my reflections on the mystery of the Incarnation we celebrate. I never tire of speaking, reflecting, pondering the mystery before us, and proclaiming it 'in season and out of season'.

And what of this mystery of the Incarnation? God became flesh in the person of Jesus. God "did not disdain the Virgin's womb" but took to himself our human nature. Why? To express his unconditional love for you and me. The priest at every Mass, when pouring a drop of water into the cup of wine, says this prayer: "May we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity."

That is the ongoing divinization of men and women. That is how God becomes vulnerable in every birth, in every life lived. Desiring, hoping, moving us to accept more profoundly the gift of his loving nature into our human nature, completing His plan of bringing us into his divinity, re-creating us as his sons and daughters.

Sometimes our idea of God turns him into a twisted, distorted, fake deity, a tyrant. In spite of ourselves, these ideas can and do come into our minds and hearts. This distant and irresponsible deity, this big thing, this brute force frightens us. It is a man-made, self-centered deity that is small and cheap and cheapens us.

When we are tempted in this way, we desperately need to turn to our Lord Jesus. Jesus was sent to correct this idea, to tear away the mask we have made to cover the true God. And he came to make known to all men and women of good will who would listen to his Good News: God is love, and only love, and nothing but love. His weakness is in fact his mercy, his love. All embracing love, an all-powerful weakness that does not impose its will, but invites us into the beauty and greatness of holiness.

Look at the crib, look at the Infant in the manger; what does this suggest to you – power? might? strength? No, weakness, helplessness, total dependence on Mary and Joseph. That is God, our Father, embracing the world by becoming one with it in its reality. For Him, this battered, war-torn world is too beautiful to abandon, too marvellous to give up on. He took it up into himself; he embraced it, forgiving everything to give it hope.

My prayer this Christmas is that we continue to experience his uncompromising and unconditional love, and then we can be certain of being a light shining in the darkness that surrounds us. May your Christmas be merry and your New Year bright!

+ Marcel Gervais
Archbishop of Ottawa