



2016 CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

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"When I see the heavens, the work of your hands, and the moon and the stars which you arranged, who are we that you should keep us in mind - mere human beings that you care for us?"

The question which these beautiful words from Psalm 8 pose, find an extraordinary answer in the mystery of Christmas. As Saint John expresses it in his Gospel, "God loved the world so much that he sent his only Son that all who believe in him might not be lost but might have eternal life" (John 3:16).

We live in an age where the unimaginable power, beauty, wonder and vastness of creation, are known in ways that our ancestors could never have believed. For us as Christians, this extraordinary universe is not an obstacle to belief in God: rather it is a stimulus to a deeper, almost overpowering understanding of the greatness of the creator, who gives existence to all that exists and who keeps everything in existence, through endless ages.

How can we do anything other than stand in awe at the creation, and even more in the presence of our creator? The psalmist is right to say, "who are we, O Mighty God, that you should keep us in mind?"

In Jesus, whose birth we celebrate at Christmas, God responds by saying to us, "in the extraordinary vastness and complexity of my creation, you are the ones whom I have created and chosen to enter into a relationship of profound and intimate love with me.

So much do I love you, and want to be one with you, that I have, in my Son Jesus, become one of you and one with you. In a world in which it is so easy to lose sight of me, misunderstand me, or even forget me, I have given you my Son, so that in him you might hear me speak, see me reach out with compassion, recognise me as the one who heals and forgives, and see me, in his suffering and death, as the one who will go to any lengths to save you. - because I love you."

This extraordinary encounter between God and his people begins with the conception and birth of Jesus. This tiny, fragile baby, is the presence of the mighty creator, God among us. He will grow and develop as we all do, and his life, free from sin and totally given to his Father and to us, will reveal to us what real, fully human living, is meant to be.

As we celebrate Christmas this year, I invite you to gaze with wonder on this helpless baby, lying in his manger. Recognise in him, the extraordinary love God has for you. Allow that love to be the foundation of your lives, a source of strength and hope in times of struggle and sorrow, and an inspiration for that reaching out to others with compassion and care, which is the defining characteristic of life lived to the full, of life lived as a disciple of Jesus.

I wish you and all your loved ones a very happy, holy and joy-filled Christmas.

+ Timothy Costelloe SBD