



2023 Christmas Message

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

One of our popular Christmas Carols begins with these words: *What child is this who, laid to rest on Mary's lap, is sleeping?* Very quickly, the carol moves to an answer: *This, this, is Christ the King, the babe, the son of Mary.*

Each year, as Christmas comes around, we are invited to let this same question - *what child is this* - arise in our minds and our hearts, and to reflect on the answers which emerge.

The question is, hopefully, one which matters to us. It is certainly one which matters to the Lord Jesus. You will recall the time when Jesus asked this very question of His apostles: *who do you say that I am?*

When Simon Peter, the leader of the twelve apostles, responded to Jesus on their behalf, he said, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"*. It is an answer which is not so very different from the one given in the Christmas Carol. And it is the same answer which has been, and continues to be, at the heart of the Christian faith. Jesus is God among us as one of us. In His humanity, He is accessible to us, just as we are accessible to each other. We can know Him - and grow in our knowledge of Him - just as we come to know each other. And we can love Him - and grow in our love for Him - just as we can deepen our love for those closest to our hearts.

But Jesus occupies a unique place in human history, for His humanity both conceals and reveals His divinity, if only we look and listen with the eyes and ears of faith. In coming to know Him, we come to know God. Jesus said so Himself. *"To have seen me,"* He once said to one of His apostles, *"is to have seen the Father"*. When, especially in the pages of the gospels, we hear Him speak we are hearing the words and voice of God. When we see Him bringing hope and healing to people, we are witnesses to the compassion of God in action. In every encounter He has with



people, we are being given an insight into who God really is, and what it is that God seeks to do and be in our lives.

This is why Jesus can proclaim Himself to be the Way, and the Truth, and the Life: not just one of many ways - but God's way; not just one truth competing with others - but God's truth; not just one option for life - but Life itself, the divine life, offered to us as a gift.

Our Judaea-Christian tradition rests on a profound belief: that we are made in the image and likeness of God. This truth reaches its highest expression in Jesus Christ who is, quite literally, the perfect living, human image and likeness of God. In Him we see who and what we are created and called to be - and in him we find a companion on our life's journey who can, if we let Him, enable us to be who and what we are called to be.

This Christmas, like every Christmas, we are invited to hear once again God's call to us, made real and concrete in Jesus, to come to Him when we are weary and over-burdened and find our rest in Him; to remain among those people who once walked in darkness but who now walk in the light; to allow ourselves to hear deep within us the echo of His voice telling us not to be afraid for He is with us.

What child is this who, laid to rest on Mary's lap, is sleeping?

This, this is Christ the Lord - Come let us adore him.

May this be a time of deep happiness, of reconciliation and peace, and of joyful hope for the future for you, your families and all those who are dear to you. A happy and holy Christmas to you all.

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