

A message for Christmas
By Bishop Milan Lach, SJ

We are told in the Letter to the Hebrews that Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever (Heb 13:8). While our Lord and God is unchangeable, we, human beings, are subject to change.

While God is eternal, unchanging goodness, we have the chance to change our path, turning from our sinful life to “walk in a manner worthy of God” (1 Thess 2:12).

Our Lord God wants to save humanity from evil, sin and ultimately from death because he loves us.

For this reason, he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, on Earth out of his love for mankind, to be born among men and to take flesh from the Virgin in Bethlehem.

And, for this reason, on Christmas Day, with joy in our hearts, we say the traditional greeting, “Christ is born!” We respond by saying, “Glorify him!”

Our traditional salutation is derived from the first ode of the canon of Matins for the feast of the Nativity.

The canon is ultimately a paraphrase of the great fourth-century teacher and Cappadocian Father Gregory the Theologian in one of his homilies on the Nativity.

Notice that this simple greeting and the canon use the present tense. Why is this? Because Jesus Christ also wants to be born in our hearts anew in this season, today.

He desires that he and his love would be for us the greatest gift that we could receive.

There is no greater gift than Jesus who is Love itself, present to us and available to us to give us life.

This great gift of love has unfortunately gone missing in these latter times.

It is not the gifts under the Christmas tree that will make us and our families happy.

Christ wants to give us the gift of love, peace and happiness. However, we have to open our hearts to him, giving him space to be born there.

We must not have fear but courage.

Let us not be like the men in Bethlehem, who did not have room at the inn for the Mother of God, Joseph, and Jesus about to be born.

Let our hearts be ready, made pure through prayer, fasting, almsgiving and confession.

However small and humble our simple hearts may be, let them have the space to receive the Christ Child.

Dear brothers and sisters, this is my heartfelt wish for you: that your hearts may be open to the gift of Christ this Christmas.

I pray for you. As a sign of my love for you, I offer you my episcopal blessing on the feast of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God and Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. Amen.

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