



Christmas Message from Bishop Shane B. Janzen Metropolitan and Bishop Ordinary of The Anglican Catholic Church of Canada

'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us'.

Beloved Brethren:

Christmas! The joyous Day and Season when we celebrate the birth of the Saviour, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The world around us for just a brief time pauses; gifts are exchanged, love is renewed, and family and friends gather once more. Yet the Gospel message for Christmas Day would have us look beyond the superficial, the merely human, and stop and ask ourselves, "Who is this babe lying in a manger?" The answer every true believer would offer in response is both profoundly simple and yet profoundly deep: "He is the Incarnation of God - the Word made flesh."

Christmas is ultimately not just about the birth of the Christ Child at Bethlehem, though it is certainly the focus of our celebrations. In truth Christmas, the Nativity of the Lord, is the affirmation, the revelation, that Jesus born of Mary of Nazareth is the only begotten Son of God, The Christ; Who came and lived among us - God in the flesh, the Saviour of the world. For the humble birth of Jesus in Bethlehem which we celebrate at Christmas is the perfect revelation of God to the reality that on that holy night so many centuries ago God Himself was born into the world He created. And that understanding, that truth, is something which so many in our modern world just cannot get, let alone accept. Consequently, for many people the meaning of Christmas has been lost or sadly replaced by a worldly version of romantic love which ultimately disappoints and even fails.

None of us could ever fathom what it means for God to be born in a manger. How do we explain Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, stooping to become a tiny infant? It was and is, of course, the greatest act of humility the world has ever known or will ever know. Nor for that matter, can our minds even begin to understand let alone grasp what was involved in God becoming man. We will never comprehend why He who was infinitely rich would choose to become poor. Why He would assume a human nature and enter into a world He knew would ultimately reject Him and kill Him. Nor can anyone explain why God would enter the world He created not as a king, or a prince, or a superman; but as a frail, new born babe. Yet He did. Without forsaking His divine nature or diminishing His Godhead in any sense, He was born into our world as a tiny infant.

People ask, 'Did He cry?'; or 'Did He need the normal care and feeding one would give any other baby?' Yes, of course He did ... He was fully human, with all the needs and emotions and frailty that are common to every human. Yet He was also fully God - all wise, all powerful, all knowing. Yet we may ask, how can this be true? How can Jesus be both divine and human, both God and man? I don't know. But the Christmas Gospel, indeed the whole of the Scriptures, clearly reveal that this is so.

Jesus, the Word made flesh, the divine Son of God, voluntarily suspended the full application of His divine attributes and was born of a human mother, the Virgin Mary. He didn't give up being God, but He willingly gave up the independent use of the privileges and powers that were His as God. Through His birth, life, ministry, passion and death, He remained fully God and fully human.

For nearly 2,000 years, debate has been raging about who Jesus really is. Cults and skeptics have offered various explanations. They say He is one of many gods, a created being, a high angel, a good teacher, a prophet, and so on. The common thread of which is that they make Jesus less than God. But the Bible reveals the truth. John's Gospel, which we read every Christmas Day, begins with a clear statement that Jesus is God:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made".

John 1:1-3.

Who is "the Lord" spoken of in these verses? Verse 14 removes any doubt:

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."

The Biblical and historical record of man gives evidence of the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies with respect to His birth and place of birth. In Jesus we have also the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies of the coming Messiah, of His life and ministry, His death and resurrection. Jesus began His earthly ministry with a simple act - He created wine at a wedding in Cana of Galilee; yet only God can create something from nothing. He healed people who were hopelessly ill. He gave to those who were blind the gift of sight. He opened ears that had never heard. He restored broken and withered limbs. He created fish and bread to feed thousands who were hungry for what He alone could give them. He raised the dead by simply commanding them to rise and come forth. He forgave the woman caught in adultery, and promised the repentant thief Paradise. And He has promised you and me His unconditional love and everlasting life.

Who was this Child? He is God Incarnate. The evidence is clear for all who seek and find Him. The Scriptures are clear, though the world seems content to keep Him as a seasonal decoration, the babe in the manger. Who was this Child? He is Christ the Lord, the Saviour of the world, come to earth for you and me.

This Christmas...can you see Him for who He really is? Do you know Him as Lord and Saviour? He came into this darkened frightened world that we might see the light of His love and accept the greatest gift ever offered...pardon and peace unto eternal life!

May I extend to each of you, and to your family and friends a prayer for a most Blessed Christmas. May our Lord Jesus Christ dwell in your hearts in all faith, and may He richly bless you and yours this holy Season.

With my prayers and blessing for a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,

In Christ Jesus our Lord,

