

Dear Friends,

As a Christmas greeting and thought, I send you my notes for a homily on Christmas Eve. Thanks for your friendship and many blessings to you for 2009!

Peace,  
Fr. Dave

CHRISTMAS 2008

Dear Brothers and friends,

First of all, merry and happy, blessed Christmas to each of you.  
Christmas is a time when we exchange greetings.  
It is right to do so, because this feast underlines the way in which God comes in the lives of each of us.“  
Through daily events, life, work, especially family and friends  
The incarnation of Christ means that God is here with us,  
Just as he came at Bethlehem, in the crib, 2000 yrs ago.  
We rejoice at his continuing presence in daily life here, together.  
Christ is present among us, that is the great message of this and every Christmas.

Many of you recall from your study of the Bhagavad Gita  
The famous passage where Krishna teaches Arjuna (Bk 4, vv. 7-8)  
That whenever there is a decline of dharma (faith, obedience, justice),  
Then the divine takes on a new self (tada manam srjamy aham)  
And comes into the world, for the deliverance of the good  
And the destruction of evil, from age to age (yuge-yuge).  
So the divine may appear to our Hindu brothers & sisters at times as a tortoise  
Or a boar or a fish or as Rama or Krishna or even Buddha,  
And will come again at the end of time, to inaugurate a new age.

Well, we Christians believe something rather different:  
that God came only once and for all into our world  
In the form of Jesus, whose birth we celebrate tonight,  
And who changes all history for ever,

Opens up the definitive possibility of deliverance for the good and the destruction of evil.

Still, I was thinking of this passage from the Gita today,  
In relation to Christmas,  
Because we as Christians also believe that God comes again and again  
Into our lives, always in function of his one coming in the flesh in Bethlehem.  
Each year his coming into our world takes on a new meaning  
Gives us new hopes, opens up new possibilities.  
That is why we celebrate Christmas with such enthusiasm, each year,  
Again and again, always finding something new in our rediscovery  
Of the coming of the God made flesh in our midst.  
We aren't just remembering some great historical event that happened 2000 yrs ago. But we are celebrating the fact that God is with us now, living in our midst.

What kind of a world is Jesus being born into this year 2008?  
First of all, not a very cheerful world!  
Like the people of the time of Isaiah (1st reading), we walk a lot in darkness  
And we can fairly call our world a land of gloom.  
As in that reading, we feel burdened by imposed yokes and cruel taskmasters,  
Trampled down by powerful evil oppressors bent on our destruction.

Those images of Isaiah seem verified today.  
Our world of 2008 needs a savior to come to deliver the good and destroy the evil.  
Recent experiences have shown that we cannot count on our jobs, wealth and riches  
Because we live in a time of economic collapse.  
Our world is torn in so many places Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East, Somalia, Zimbabwe, and endless others  
By violence and hatred and fear and bottomless poverty and exploitation.  
So many people live in darkness,  
trampled underfoot by cruel forces which they cannot counteract.

Especially here, in our India  
We know that Christians in Orissa are menaced today with violence,  
That some wanted to call a bandh there today, a general strike, closing down everything,  
That the leaders of our Christian communities have cautioned against too joyous and grand and noisy a celebration,

And we know that many Christians all across India feel that this year our feast should be cautious and sober.

We know that some of our neighboring parishes here and in Ranchi  
Have recently experienced violence and threats,  
We do not always know from whom,  
We cannot forget the horrible attacks and murders in Mumbai a month ago,  
Motivated it seems by political and religious and economic rivalries,  
By people who know nothing but to destroy others.  
We know that so many people, even in this rich city Bangalore,  
Live in misery and suffer all kinds of injustice and cruelty.  
We know that our little world is not so safe and comfortable,  
Like that cold and unwelcoming world into which Jesus was born,  
Because there was no room at the inn,  
No one who took much pity or care for the young couple Mary & Joseph  
or for their child.

Like Mary and Joseph and their infant, we are caught up in big events beyond our control

Like the census of Caesar Augustus in their time,  
which ruined all their hopes for a normal, peaceful new birth  
And which led eventually to their exile in Egypt.  
And on our local level,  
Even here in our beautiful safe haven at Deepahalli,  
we often feel our poverty, our incapacity, insecurity, our tensions and our fear.  
We don't feel safe and comfortable about our present or our future,  
Individually, as communities, and on the national and world levels.

Yet Mary and Joseph and those who believed  
Were able to find hope and meaning and joy  
Not so much in the small gifts they could see a little baby in a poor manger  
As in their belief that this child represented a great promise,  
That this little baby was  
Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace  
Who would have thought it?  
It took the eyes of faith, a great trust in God, to see God in those events 2000  
years ago,  
And it takes eyes of faith and great trust to see God among us in our world now.

But this is the message of Christmas:  
God is Emmanuel, God-Among-us,

He lives with us and in us,  
In our daily lives and in our friends, in our efforts to make a better world,  
In our little activities and plans and dreams for the future,  
In all the ordinary people, much like us, who strive for this better world,  
For harmony & respect among religions and ethnic groups,  
For peace and justice, for the uplift and self-respect of the poor and abandoned.

God lives among us when we find the grace  
To live in peace and harmony and respect,  
To listen and communicate with love,  
To offer our efforts for the sake of the poor, the lonely, the abandoned,  
To make use of all our opportunities to dream and study and prepare ourselves  
To be people for others, at the service of those who live in misery.

We believe that God came only once in a definitive human form in Jesus,  
But we also believe that He will come again at the end of time,  
To make sense and justify everything that we might do  
To live in the good and to create good around us.

So we come today to the crib  
Like the shepherds (1st song)  
And we join in the song of the angels (Gloria, alleluia),  
In our songs we join the many generations of people who have been waiting &  
believing  
That God would come (prophets, seers, angels  
and men, Isaac and Abraham are mentioned in some of our songs)  
To deliver us and protect us and give us new hope.

That is above all what I wish you for this Christmas  
A genuine, firm hope and trust  
That God is coming, always comes, each moment anew,  
In our lives as our Savior and our companion,  
To defeat the evil and reinforce what is right.

May you experience this saving presence in a very deep and special way this  
year.  
Let us make this same prayer for one another as we sing together and celebrate  
with enthusiasm tonight.

