



"The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all." Titus 2:11
(Extract from second Reading for Christmas Mass during the Night)

In the year 2023, Christmas marks the eight hundredth anniversary of a very special event. In the small Italian village of Greccio, St. Francis of Assisi found a grotto and, on the night of December 24, 1223, he and the villagers created the first living nativity scene. Every year since then, the custom of installing a crib in our churches and chapels, in our streets, in our homes, in our squares, in our neighborhoods, has been perpetuated. For St. Francis and for us, this goes far beyond folklore. It's about making visible and living the fact that on this holiest of nights, the Son of God enters our world to bring forth the light of his Father.

Christmas celebrates the fulfillment of God's promise, announced by the prophets, to His people, whom He has always loved. Out of concern for our salvation, our happiness and our eternity, God has intervened in a unique and singular way in our time and space. The All-Powerful God, Creator of Heaven and Earth, decided to enter our world in a humble and unexpected way. Conceived of the Holy Spirit in the virginal womb of Mary, God became incarnate, and came among us as a newborn child. This non-threatening entry into our world will allow Him to reveal himself as a loving and compassionate person, eager to set us free and help us partake in the fullness of his life. It is this very same child that will be known by many as Jesus Christ, Son of God, Lord and Savior who will lay down his life on the cross and rise from the dead.

"The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all." This is how Saint Paul announces to Titus the good news of the arrival of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the long-awaited hope of a people who have walked in darkness; of sinners awaiting their redemption; of a people called to become a holy nation. Jesus "gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds." (Titus 2:14)

In wishing you a Merry Christmas, I pray that you may truly experience a divine encounter and savor the joy of being loved and saved. This is God the Father's gift to you in His Son, for He wants your salvation and needs you to build His Kingdom. This is the Mission to which we have been sent! As children of God and missionary disciples of Christ, let us take to heart our calling and bring Jesus to everyone wherever they are.

Merry Christmas!

✠ Marcel Damphousse
Archbishop of Ottawa-Cornwall