



December 25, 2022

## The Nativity of the Lord—Christmastime

"The grace of God has appeared, saving all..." Titus 2:11



Dear Friends,

The official name for today's feast is the Nativity of the Lord. While we look back at the historical birth of Jesus of Nazareth, we are celebrating something more. We call the appearance of God in Jesus the Incarnation. This word literally means "in flesh." But the incarnation did not stop with the historical person of Jesus. In the resurrection the Spirit of the Risen Jesus comes to dwell within all of us in our flesh, and in the matter of creation. So, at Christmas we are celebrating the Lord of Life who comes to dwell in and amongst us. He is born here, now and always, in hearts ready to receive him.

On Christmas Eve in 1513 an elderly Franciscan Friar, Giovanni Giocondo, wrote a note to a dear friend. His words still are poignant for us today. He captures this sense of the divine breaking through into our world. This is one of my all-time favorite quotes. I want to share it with you this Christmas.

*I salute you. I am your friend, and my love for you goes deep.  
There is nothing I can give you which you have not.  
But there is much, very much, that, while I cannot give it, you can take.  
No Heaven can come to us unless our hearts find rest in it today. Take Heaven!  
No peace lies in the future which is not hidden in this present little instant. Take Peace!*

*The gloom of this world is but a shadow. Behind it, yet within our reach, is joy.  
There is radiance and glory in the darkness, could we but see; and to see we have only to look...  
I beseech you to look.*

*Life is so generous a giver, but we, judging its gifts by their covering, cast them away as ugly or heavy or hard. Remove the covering, and you will find beneath it a living splendor, woven of love, by wisdom, with power. Welcome it, grasp it, and you touch the angel's hand that brings it to you. Everything we call a trial, a sorrow, or a duty: believe me, that the angel's hand is there, and the wonder of the overshadowing Presence. Our joys, too: be not content with them as joys, they too conceal diviner gifts.*

*Life is so full of meaning and of purpose, so full of beauty—beneath its covering—that you will find that earth but cloaks your heaven. Courage, then claim it: that is all! But courage you have; and the knowledge that we are pilgrims together, wending through unknown country, home.*

*And so, at this Christmas time, I greet you; not quite as the world sends greetings, but with profound esteem, and with the prayer that for you, now and forever, the day breaks and the shadows flee away.*

My prayer for us this Christmas is that we always be aware of the presence of the Divine Child who comes to bring us and our world newness of life, love, joy and peace.

Christ is born!

*Fr Ron*

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