



Christmas 2011

Dear Friends:

The hopes and fears of all the years are met in Thee tonight. These lyrics from the Christmas hymn, “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” capture well the paradox of our times. Technological advances in the fields of medicine and communication open up whole vistas of hope-filled possibilities. Yet, the fears about what tomorrow holds are real and unnerving. The economic distress that our families continue to endure, the unending violence suffered by the innocent, and the moral decline unraveling the very fabric of our families are sobering realities that make it difficult to be hopeful about what tomorrow may bring.

In the midst of our fragile human condition, the Word became flesh. God has sent His last Word, His most profound Word, His most beautiful Word into the world. And that Word means: I love you. God has come and illuminated the cruel night of our fears with the light of His undying love.

So, light the candles! They have more right to be here than darkness. Christ brought a Kingdom which is not of this world, yet a Kingdom which is capable of changing this world, for it has the power to change hearts, to enlighten minds and to strengthen wills. By taking on our flesh, with all its weaknesses, and transfiguring it by the power of His Spirit, Christian hope is not a mere pipedream, but a Promise enfleshed in the Child lying in a manger.

Therefore, let us, as the psalmist bids us, “sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord all the earth.” (Ps. 96:1) It is the festival of God’s infinite love and mercy, the festival of tomorrow’s possibilities, the festival of our salvation.

May the Lord give you and your family the hope and joy which the shepherds experienced when the light of God’s glory shone around them on that first Christmas night. And may you hear His gentle words echoing in your heart: “*Anyone who follows me, will never walk in darkness, but will always have the light of life.*” (Jn. 8:12) After all, “*In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*” (Jn. 1:4-5)

May the Christ Child come to you and your loved ones this Christmas with the Gift of Love, the Blessing of Hope, and the Promise of Peace. A blessed Christmas and joy-filled New Year!

Your Brother in Christ,

Most Reverend Terry R. LaValley
Bishop of Ogdensburg