



Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

As we enter the Christmas season, we all have various experiences and emotions that are attached to this time of year. As Christ followers, the Christmas season is an opportunity we have to celebrate the birth of the One who lived – so He could die – for our benefit. Christmas under COVID. Who would have imagined when all this started for us back in March, that we would still be struggling with the coronavirus? With positive reports on the vaccine front, it's time to recall Winston Churchill's words after the Battle of El Alamein: "This is not the end, or even the beginning of the end, but it is perhaps the end of the beginning." It's not time to loosen our grip.

The Bible tells us that, wearied by travel across a barren and harsh landscape, the Holy family sought refuge in an inn at Bethlehem. Can you imagine Mary and Joseph's disappointment when the innkeeper informed them that there weren't any vacancies? All would have been a loss except for the gracious innkeeper who offered the couple a stable located at the back of the inn. In that stable was the manger which provided warmth and shelter for the baby Jesus.

There are many people whose travels through life and especially this year have left them wearied spiritually, mentally, emotionally or even financially. Each of us has been entrusted with a special gift, a sacred responsibility: to show others how the mystery of God is among us. We are called to go out into the world and share the message of God's love for all mankind.

One of my favorite resources throughout Advent and Christmas is Howard Thurman's "The Mood of Christmas." In this book, the philosopher-theologian offers this poem:

**I will light candles this Christmas,
Candles of joy, despite all the sadness,
Candles of hope where despair keeps watch,
Candles of courage where fear is ever present,
Candles of peace for tempest-tossed days,
Candles of grace to ease heavy burdens,
Candles of love to inspire all my living,
Candles that will burn all the yearlong.**

Lastly, because of the current conditions caused by the COVID-19 we have adjusted our regular Christmas service schedule to as follows.

- **Thursday Dec 24th at 6:00pm: A limited seated Livestreamed service.**
- **Immediately after the service we will offer Drive by Communion as we visit our outside Nativity scene.**
- **Friday Dec 25th Christmas morning: We will send a link for Christmas Carols by Derek and The St. Peter's Choir.**

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