

## *Christmas 2012*

Christmas is a time filled with wonder and excitement. There is the excitement of children waiting to open their Christmas presents. There is the excitement of parties and family reunions. There is an excitement to this day that no other day can match. But more important than the excitement of this day is the wonder of this day: the wonder we see on the face of our children, the wonder we see in each other's face, the wonder of God's love for us.

Christmas is filled with such wonder because it celebrates the miracle of God's love and grace for each one of us without exception. For, while we give gifts to each other today, it is God who gives us the greatest gift of all this day: the gift of his own Son, the gift of his love and grace, the gift of redemption.

The central mystery of Christmas is this: God has become Man so that we might become like God. The central mystery of Christmas is this: the eternal Word of God became flesh so that we might be filled with God's own life. The central mystery of Christmas is this: God has given us the gift of himself so that we might give the gift of ourselves to God and each other.

But if God has so entered into our lives, we can no longer say that God does not know what it means to be human. We can no longer say that God does not understand my suffering. We can no longer say that God does not know what it means to suffer and die. We can no longer say that God does not know the poverty of the human condition. For, in Christ Jesus God has shared in our human suffering. In Christ Jesus, God has become like us in all things but sin. In Christ, God has united us to himself in a way that fills us with wonder and joy.

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Little children, today is your day: the day when God became a child like you. It is a day of excitement and wonder as you wait for Santa Claus and open your presents. But do not forget the greatest gift of all, the gift of God. Do not forget Jesus. Remember how much God loves you.

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Parents and grandparents, this is your day as you look upon the wonder and excitement of your children. As you gaze upon their faces, remember the wonder and excitement of your childhood. Remember God's continuing love for you: a love reflected in the joy and wonder of your children.

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Young people, this is your day, the day when God proves his love for you. Do not become cynical, for the world is filled with cynics and naysayers. Renew your faith, renew your hope. Remember the wonder and mystery of Christmas. Remember God's love for you.

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You, who are lonely today, and you who are grieving and sorrowful today, this is your day because God knows what it means to be lonely. God knows what it means to suffer the loss of someone he loves. God knows what it means to be homeless; for, in Christ Jesus God has experienced your suffering.

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This day belongs to all of us in different ways. No one is excluded from the joy of this day. The wonder and excitement of this day belongs to all of us. The wonder and excitement of this day has the power to change and transform our lives, for this is the day the Lord has made. This is the day of our salvation.

And so we pray: Father we are filled with wonder and awe, for the mystery of your love in Jesus Christ assures us of your continuing love for each of us. Look kindly on our families, especially our children. Renew the faith of each one of us as we celebrate the wonder of your love. Free us from all injustice and violence. Strengthen and console the lonely and those filled with sorrow and grief. Give us a sense of wonder and joy, and grant us peace in our day. Amen.”