

Come to CHURCH on CHRISTMAS

REV. J. F. O'NEIL
St. Mary's Anglican Church
Christmas, 1939, was full of the gathering storm of the Second World War.

Clergyman in Toronto, the Reverend Gordon Hern, wrote the following message to his people that year. It is worthy of being read as well as its insight into the meaning of this feast for Christmas.

Only God Could Have Thought of Christmas

Beneath the joy of Christmas is mystery we cannot fathom. What can our poor human wit make of singing stars, wandering stars and light shining from a manger in which the hope of the world lies cradled? Something deep within us recognizes that here is poetry Divine. Only God could have thought of Christmas!

It is enough to appreciate where we cannot hope to understand. Who can explain the joy of friendship or those luminous hours when Nature speaks to our innermost needs? So Christmas comes and blesses us, though its deeper meaning can never be put into words. God becomes real to us and the world transfigured as we see it through the eyes of God will.

May God bless you and yours this Christmastide with the best your heart can desire! May the greatest gift of all be yours — the assurance that love is stronger than hate; that this poor humanity of ours is touched with Divinity; that ideals are worth striving for. Therefore let us renew our devotion to Him at the altar of the church. Let us rejoice and join with the music of the heavenly choirs. "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men of good will."

The clergy and people of St. Mary's would like to make this message their own to all readers of the "Liberal" for Christmas 1964.

REV. J. N. HEBBURN
Richmond Hill Presbyterian Church

One should note that what interested heaven on the night of Christ's birth was something which all the village disregarded. It is a strange contrast to pass from the hillside to the crowded caravansary of Bethlehem. There were men from every neighboring village, and some who had travelled from long distances. One subject alone was on their lips, Caesar and his taxes. Nobody gave a thought to Jesus' birth, and heaven that night thought of nothing else. So we are taught that what the world makes much of may be insignificant in heaven, and what the world neglects may be supreme. To grasp that is one secret of fine living. It helps us to readjust our scale of values. The relative magnitude of things is altered when we live under the aspect of eternity. Some unnoticed and interior victory may be like the

PASTOR A. J. SLATER
Free Methodist Church

Christmas is here again with its traditional decoration; its festivities; its exchanging of gifts; its gleaming lights; its felicitations, and its fragrance and beauty.

Though the commercial and social aspects of the season may tend to shade its true significance, and are apt to turn the heart and mind from the truth that Christ came to dwell with man, as the scripture reveals, "and they shall call his name Emmanuel, Matt., latter part 23. . . God with us." That is the vital, essential message of the time, as Charles Wesley so beautifully poetized it, so many years ago.

"Veiled in flesh the God Head see, Hail the Incarnate Deity,
Pleased as man with men to

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TOM HUGHES
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birth at Bethlehem, and set the angels singing in their courses. Also this exquisite story teaches us that angels may go but Christ remains. The glory departed, but the Lord remained. The vision of the angels was a memory, but the Babe they heralded was more than that—He was a living power in their midst.

Now, for many, Christmas is a sad time. It is a season when memories awaken, of those whom we have loved long since and lost awhile. But for us, as for the shepherds, Christ remains, a living presence, a Saviour and a friend, the same yesterday, today, forever. He offers His peace. He wants us to be sharers in His joy. He is here to break the tyranny of things, and in life and death to make us more than conquerors. With such a Saviour, pardoning and powerful, who will never leave us nor forsake us, cannot we all enjoy a happy Christmas?

DR. ARTHUR E. ARNOT
Richmond Hill Baptist Church

"Where is He that is born king of the Jews for we have seen His star in the east and are come to worship Him." Matt. 2:2

Whatever the scientific explanation may be the facts on record indicate that in some mysterious manner God was able to speak through the starry heavens to some wise men who were sensitive to the voice of the God of the universe and by the way of that shining star came seeking their king. They expected to find Him in Herod's palace but here their starlight failed and a brighter light shone from the more sure word of prophecy leading them to Bethlehem where they found Him and emptied their treasures of gold for a King, frankincense of worship to their god, and myrrh for One who would die for them as their Saviour.

But the star of Bethlehem has not ceased to shine. Its memory has been a light in the darkness of this world to guide ten thousand times ten thousand to the place of hope and peace. It continues to speak of Him who is Himself "THE BRIGHT AND MORNING STAR." He came as a sun to dazzle but as a star to guide. It took wise men to read the message of that star; while the rest of mankind heeded not, they followed its light until they came to the place where they too could worship in the presence of Him and in Him saw the hidden glory that the innkeeper at Bethlehem could not see but was seen by the few, Mary the mother, and Joseph, shepherds watching over their flocks by night, an old man Simeon and an old woman Anna the prophetess in the temple who "spoke of Him to all who looked for redemption."

The few welcomed Him then, the many crucified Him then. How tragic that it is still the few that crown Him now and still the many that reject Him and refuse to give Him His place in their heart and hearth in this year of our Lord 1964.

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HANS HOFMANN
The Continental Hair Stylist
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To the lonely world of a widow in Nain,
To the isolated world of a blind beggar,
To the desperate world of a stone mason with a crippled hand,
To the pathetic world of an out-cast harlot,
To the worried world of an epileptic boy's parents,
To the fearful world of a guilty Peter,
To the cheerless world of an angry Paul;
To the anxious world of despondent Matthew.
He sheds a light warm with compassion and bright with hope.

It is my prayer at Christmas that He will come afresh to two other small worlds—Yours and mine.

GOD KEEP YOU

FATHER C. J. SCHWALM
St. Mary Immaculate Catholic Church

At the centre of the Nativity scene is the Divine Child reaching out His arms in a gesture of love to all men and asking a return of love that comes with belief in Him as the Saviour.

The hope that springs from this intimate encounter is the glorious reward of all Christians. It is a hope in the fulfillment of one's own destiny in time and eternity, the hope that all mankind may be united in peace and love.

REV. F. F. BENNETT
St. John's Baptist Church

In a valuable book called "Money", published sixty-five years ago, Dr. Andrew Murray comments: "When a man gives, the world still asks, 'What does he give?' Christ asks: 'How does he give?'"

His words were sparked by the story in the Gospel of St. Mark (12:41) where Jesus "sat down opposite the temple almsbox and watched the people putting their money into it." Of the widow who gave a farthing, all she possessed, Jesus said "She had put in more than all the others."

At this season of the year when we are rightly concerned about giving, because God has given us His Son — the

story of Jesus observing the givers in the Temple reminds us that at Christmas time also Jesus notices our giving.

While so many people look at the size of the gift or its monetary value, Christ looks at the giver and his motive. The spirit of the world is "How much can I get? What do I get out of it?" The spirit of Christ and Christmas giving is "How can I best show my love to those about me? What can I do for others?" We have harmed our children by asking them, "What do you want Santa to bring you?" I always love to see children carrying home the burdens of their private shopping at Christmas, because it means they have been thinking of someone else.

Those who already think of their money and all their possessions as a trust from God don't need this observation; but could we get away from the ugly habit of competitive giving? Do we give in order to have greater credit bounce back off our own head? We shouldn't be trying to impress either God or our friends by childishly boasting, "My gift is bigger than his — or cost more." God appreciates what we do for Him, through His Church, through gifts to others. But His estimate is based on the love and sacrifice in our hearts as we give.

REV. C. G. HIGGINSON
Richmond Hill United Church

A prayer for moderns contains this petition: "Give us the power not only to launch a Sputnik but to follow a star."

Man's scientific discoveries, technological advances and cultural achievements are impressive; but we still need to ask, "What are the real values in life? Has existence any meaning? Does human life count for anything or are we as the beasts that perish? We are able to launch rockets into space; but we are unsure of man's nature and destiny."

God, at Christmas, opens our eyes to see a star. He invites us to enter a stable where a Babe is laid in a manger. In spirit we can still journey there and find in the Infant of a day, God's answer to man's eternal longings. Do we not discover that His Name is the same today as it was nineteen hundred years ago, Emmanuel, God with us?

ANIMALS HELPED

An ancient tradition holds that animals helped spread the glad tidings of the arrival of the Christ-child, so in many countries barnyard animals are served special rations on Christmas Eve.

FATHER F. C. ROBINSON
Our Lady Queen of the World Catholic Church

The feast of Christmas necessarily brings to our attention the notion of birthdays. Every person has a birthday and most people appreciate its celebration with a little party and a gift. What tears would flow if for example on little Johnny's birthday every person in the family received a present except Johnny. Can't you hear him sobbing "but it is my birthday and I didn't get anything."

Most adults too, are not unhappy when their birthday is remembered. Perhaps it is only a card, perhaps a book, perhaps a family party and many gifts, but grown-ups like to be remembered on "their" day also. This is all very normal and very legitimate in our society.

However, December 25 is the birthday of a very dear Friend of ours—in fact the closest Friend we can have—and instead of giving Him gifts—we look for and receive them. How unnatural we act towards Christ. One looking in from Mars might conclude that Jesus Christ is our enemy and not our Loving Brother and Friend. Yet there is no sobbing on Christ's part. He is the every patient — ever tender loving Saviour.

You might say, how can I give a gift to Christ on His birthday. In one crib in one Church on Christmas Day in Richmond Hill, there is a dish for donations which will be sent to the missions. Nothing could please Christ more on His birthday than to see people giving for the conversion of pagans. There are millions of children and adults this Christmas for whom December 25th means nothing, simply because no messenger from Canada has come to them to tell them of the True God — and His Son's birth in Bethlehem. Remember, it is Christ's birthday, and Christ should receive the gifts.

REV. ALBERT E. MYERS
St. Paul's Lutheran Church

A pastor once found it necessary to attend the trial of a young man found guilty of murder. The young man's father, a respected and honorable person, was present all through the trial.

He listened to all the grim evidence of his son's deeds. But during the recess the pastor saw the father walk up beside his son. He put his arm across the young man's shoulder.

He was standing with this criminal — he seemed to say — with unfailing parental love, sharing the shame and guilt. It seemed to the pastor like a parable of God's limitless love for His sinful human children.

The father in the courtroom could do nothing to remove his son's guilt or save him from execution.

The eternal Father can save His children, by sharing with them the tragedy and penalty of sin.

That's the message of Christmas. It seems rather grim against the carefree merriment of the season. But Christmas survives through the centuries because it is more than a happy holiday.

Christmas announces that the eternal God has come to stand with His children in their human darkness. He has come to save them from the consequences of their sins.

Here is something so fantastic, unbelievable that it should stun us with surprise each time we think of it. The hidden God, so far beyond the limits of our imagination, was born in human life.

He became a human Child to save us from the condemnation that we had brought upon ourselves. This is the Christian faith.

Of course we celebrate this Christmas festival with all the joy of which we are capable. Heaven celebrated too, with the angelic choir heralding Christ's birth.

This is the central event in man's history on earth — the everlasting Light breaking through the darkness of our human story of heartbreak and hurt, illness, accidents and death.

Our ancient burden of sorrow is lifted from us. The road ahead is made straight. God comes to us.

Maybe you didn't give or won't get all the presents you expected this Christmas. Perhaps you're tired out from the festival preparations.

A lot of gifts have to go back to the store. They have to be exchanged for the right size or color. The children may be overexcited.

In a weak moment maybe you have wished that Christmas

would be abolished by law. It would be good for a lot of us to cut down on the conventional pleasures that are tied up with this day. Christmas should be restored to its rightful place as a deeply religious festival.

Christmas rolls in like a fresh tide of faith. It lifts us above all weariness. Our Saviour is come. Of course we say "Merry

Christmas" to everyone on December 25. We say it so often we may seem to forget what it means. But we haven't really forgotten.

We have unfathomable reason for joy. The Lord has come. This is the good news which cancels out all the dismal and discouraging things that happen in the world. We Christians have good reason for being cheerful on Christmas.

Christmas Greetings
Carol joyfully... Christmas is here. All the best to you and yours.

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BEST CHRISTMAS WISHES TO ALL OUR FRIENDS.

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Greetings

We're thankful for our many friends and wish them happiness at this very special time. Merry Christmas!

MRS. LAURANCE FOLLIOTT, Prop.
LLOYD REID, Mgr.
AND THE STAFF OF
SUMMIT VIEW GARDENS RESTAURANT
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Richmond Heights Centre
YONGE ST. NORTH RICHMOND HILL

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Barber Shop	no phone	Nordica's Sportswear	884-4801
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