



Christmas Message 2009

Because of the present economic crisis, Christmas this year has exceptionally special significance. Our time of hardship leads us to think about our own values and lifestyle. Although an end to the crisis may appear to be in sight, its repercussions will certainly persist for some time to come. Our political leaders have already told us there will still be more job losses.

Where can we put our trust and confidence in this period of uncertainty, stress and questioning? What can we believe in, if anything? Is happiness possible only when we are buying and accumulating material things? Can happiness be possible if we are indifferent to the wellbeing of others? A monk who is a psychiatrist has suggested the following remedies during a recession: "Take 15 minutes of silence a day, and ask, in prayer, what it means to be a human being, what it means to love, and if it is possible for the world to be different"

Advent reminds us that "God keeps his word; his Light will dawn." When we find ourselves caught up in decorations and advertisements, God invites us to take a moment to recognize the Light and the Word which is at the heart of our lives.

Jesus, the "Light of the world" (John 9.5), invites us also to be light (John 12.36). When we share his light, we transform our world -- if we love those with whom Christ is identified: the hungry, the stranger and the poor (Matthew 25.35).

May this Christmas season revive in us a sense of solidarity, sharing and simplicity. May it also help us rediscover what is most essential in life: to love God, and to love our neighbour even as we love ourselves.

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