



25 December 2023

Praised be Jesus Christ.

My dear brothers and sisters,

I wish to bring warm Christmas greetings to all of you and your families as faithful Catholics throughout the Archdiocese of Toronto. This is always a very special time of the year, a beautiful season for us to celebrate, reflect and joyfully retell the Greatest Story ever told – the Birth of Our Saviour Jesus in Bethlehem.

I hold a special place in my heart this Christmas for the people of the archdiocese as it is my first with you as your shepherd. It has been a joy getting to know so many of you since my arrival in March and know that all of you, whether we have met or have not yet had the pleasure of doing so, remain close in prayer this Christmas.

Each time we hear the story of the birth of Jesus Christ, it provides for us a wonderful opportunity to reflect on His coming into the world. The long and no doubt difficult journey made by Mother Mary and her spouse, the good St. Joseph from Nazareth; looking desperately for a suitable dwelling and settling on a simple manger. The angels who proclaimed his birth. We reflect on the shepherds and wise men who followed the star and came to worship Our Lord in his innocence and vulnerability as they found him in his Mother's arms.

I would like to invite you to consider two simple ideas this Christmas as you and your loved ones enjoy this special time of year.

First, God sent us his only begotten son Jesus to be the **light of the world**. As Christians, we carry the light of Jesus in our hearts. It is a flame that burns eternal. We need to let this light grow inside all of us, especially when we face the many challenges and darkness of the world. Just as Mother Mary did in giving her "yes", so too must we surrender daily, passionately and wholeheartedly to the holy will of the Lord and allow His Son to enter more deeply, and dwell with his grace in our lives. This way he will enlighten our days and transform our lives.



A second point. Yes, we possess the divine light within each one of our hearts, the light of faith and devotion, of charity and grace; but as we know ever so well, unless we allow it **to shine unto others**, darkness will prevail. Our challenge, at Christmas and throughout the new year, is to radiate this light and share it with others. Like all spiritual gifts, the more we use them and share them with others, the more they grow within us. As we share our faith and love, our care, forgiveness and hope with our sisters and brothers, the more we shall receive.

How **exactly** might we share this light with those who are struggling –at home, in our families and our communities, with our loved ones and the stranger among us? How can this light illuminate lives in our country, bringing hope, meaning, kindness and care to others in messy and complicated situations? The secret is that it is **not our own light but that of Christ** and his light is creative and unlimited, generous and transformative.

When we **share our faith** in Christ with someone who does not know him or knows him poorly, we provide an opportunity for Christ's light to shine in that person. When we **reach out to the needy**, the abandoned, the ill and the vulnerable in the name of Christ, it provides an occasion for Christ himself to shine in their lives. When we **refuse** all violence, vindictiveness, unforgiveness and greed, this allows for his light to enter, enhance and brighten the human spirit. And when we **encounter Christ** in fervent prayer and the sacraments, his light in us grows and dispels the dark recesses of our soul.

And so, just as Our Lady and St. Joseph did, let us make that faithful journey to Bethlehem. O Come Let Us Adore Him. Christ the Lord. They came from far and wide to honour and worship him. We proclaim Happy Birthday to Jesus. We thank him for giving us the precious gift of– his saving light in our daily life.

Dear Good people of Toronto – let the brilliance of that light shine brightly in and around you and may the abundance of God's overflowing love be lavished upon you and your loved ones throughout this Christmas Season and the New Year.

Sincerely Yours in Jesus with Mary,

Most Rev. Francis Leo
Archbishop of Toronto