

My dearest friends,

My Yuletide letter, with heavy heart, though with love for you all, and undying, sure and certain hope of the true Christmas message, and prayer for each and every despairing, suffering sister, brother and fellow creature, of our humanly soiled world.

Thus, as I sit here at home, half snoozing on this, a rather wet and dreary post luncheon December afternoon, I muse on a sudden thought, "Can allowing ourselves to deeply feel the experiences of Christmas help us save the world"?

Snowy white snow and jingle bells and happy feeling, might dissolve together into mental pictures of Santa Claus coming into town, then, becoming enmeshed in nostalgic visions of bleak mid-winter, frosty wind moaning, earth, hard as iron and water, like stone. Then, freeing all the emotions of life at its profound best, deeply embracing the irresistible enchantment of the little Lord Jesus with no crib for a bed, nevertheless in rustic manger snugness, cattle lowing, gurgling happily as he awakens to the sweetness of his dear Mother's unbound love. Strange to say, I observe a gravity for many, particularly, perhaps, who have no obvious religious connection, who nevertheless encounter in popular, secular Christmas, exceptional experience, above the mundanity of increasingly pressurised interminable, demoralising routine. When such exceptional Christmas experiences do occur, deeply, I can't help feeling the real presence of a stirring personal insight, internally encouraging full embrace, kindling compassion, communicative respectfulness, 'caringness' and meaningful community spirit.

This year, can we stand in anything other than deepest dread, as we sing of peace on earth and goodwill towards men, while witnessing utter, dehumanizing carnage? This, at the very place where hope in peace and goodwill was first proclaimed, now the very epitome of woe, sin and strife, with human at war with human, and callous deafness to shattering pain and anguish normalised, often repeated throughout history, but never before worse than this.

Call it naïve, but, at least in our "post Christian" west, this subliminal and sentimental attachment to half-forgotten rituals, at a time when everyone makes some acknowledgement of human commonality with merit in unity, become well-tuned with profound reality of effective virtue. Christmas does, we can overwhelmingly agree, generally, bring about in many community settings, attitudes that are creative, compassionate, participatory, egalitarian, ecologically aware and spiritually efficacious, where there is a feeling of 'no one should be left behind'.

In a powerful way, it is at such times, especially juxtaposed against pernicious, wilful tragedy, that the sheer aliveness felt numinously and inexplicably in body and mind and spirit in Christmas camaraderie, we can know in a very vivid way, that we hold the key, the means, of universal renewal in action. Christmas connectedness is living proof of possibility of wider connectedness. Where we see and accept exceptional experience in our socially shared involvement, awakening the spirit of amazing benign possibility, we know that possibility even in a damaged world is great.

For us, Christmas that puts Jesus at its heart, is more than exceptional experience of half forgotten spiritual collective memory, it is exceptionally exceptional experience of deep and certain apprehension. The promise of peace means we must never disparage those who cannot share our sure and certain hope of Christ's promises, nor their seasonal responses to it. In fellowship we walk with our brothers and sisters. Transformation begins with "me", grows with welcome, resides in community where "I" am, develops where we can be heard, together, and make connection, gently persuading, never coercing, until beautiful harmony soothes in all the world.

Sisters and brothers, we must together stand in solidarity, rehumanizing victims of a world divided by people, literally hell bent on feeling superior, being superior, and shattering lives of forgotten "others" in what has every possibility of being a beautiful world for us all. Selfishness and greed kills, love, alone, conquers all.

The light shines in the darkness since love came into the world in all its glory: Love is the gift we are eternally bound to share, or to answer for, in our own conscience, the voice within, given by our all-loving Creator, known perfectly in Jesus Christ.

Allowing ourselves to deeply feel the experiences of Christmas will, indeed, help us save the world!

God bless you this Christmas, to be his voice and love, ever thankful for the moments of inspiration and joy - to generously share.

Love, as always,

+Brian.