



DIOCESE OF ROCKVILLE CENTRE
OFFICE OF THE BISHOP

Christmas 2015

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ,

Christ is born: sing glory! Christ has descended from heaven: go out to meet Him! Christ is on earth: lift yourselves up! Sing to the Lord, all the earth; for He who belongs to heaven is now on earth!

With these words, the fourth century theologian, St Gregory Nazianzen (+389) proclaimed the Christmas message that is as true today as it was from that first moment in Bethlehem when the Blessed Mother Mary brought her son Jesus into the world. Since that night we, like Gregory and all others who know Jesus, have exulted in the gift of the Son of God made man. His birth heralds the defeat of sin and death. His presence among us, like us in all things but sin, shines the bright promise of God's merciful love on our faces and into our hearts. Who does not rejoice to know that *God so loved the world that He sent His Son?* Which one of us would turn away from this blessed scene of the Virgin with Joseph in the Bethlehem stable offering the Child to us so that all humankind can be saved? How can we do anything but sing *Glory to God* with the angels and bend low in adoration with the shepherds. This night we all become free! This night we all are one. This night we see the salvation of our God.

My dear friends, this has not been an easy year for any of us, for our families, for our parishes, for our nation, for the world. The forces of darkness are strong and determined. Terrorism seems to be widening its sweep and too many of our leaders seem unsure of what must be done to protect society and care for the suffering. Too many families are struggling to make ends meet. Too many youth in our midst are led astray by the false gods of drugs, alcohol and momentary pleasures. Freedom is under attack at home and abroad. Many look in all the wrong places for answers that hurt rather than help.

We have the right answer. We all need Christmas. We all need Jesus. We all need Mary. God has given HIS answer to the world, an answer that overcomes all its tragedies and all its temptations. God's response to our cries is clear and unequivocal: His Son! Yes: Jesus Christ, His Son! He is God's answer to our cries. He is God's gift for our lives. He breaks down the barriers, for the name of peace is Jesus Christ. He is Our Peace! And He and He alone can calm our fears, renew our strength, lift up our hearts and give joy to our lives!

Yes, my friends, this Christmas go out to meet Him; lift up your hearts; Sing for joy. For all humankind has seen the salvation of our God! A blessed and Joyous Christmas to you all!

Bishop of Rockville Centre