



13 December A.D. 2019

Dear friends,

In less than two weeks, when we gather to worship on Christmas Eve, we will hear once again the message of the angel spoken to the shepherds: *Behold I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord* (Luke 2:10-11). Notice that the angel does not simply say 'Christ is born,' but, 'To you He is born.' Neither does he say, 'I bring good news,' but, 'To you I bring good news.' This wonderful Christmas message is for each and every one of you personally.

The birth of Jesus Christ, God-in-the-flesh, is an historical event that really happened some 2000 years ago; and it took place for you. God became a human being; therefore our humanity is renewed and given an awesome dignity. In light of this astounding reality, our darkness is illuminated. Our brokenness and frailties are taken up into God's life and wonderfully transfigured. Our guilt and shame, our fears and regrets – now these can only be things of the past. For the glory of God has appeared among us and in us – in our human flesh. God has stooped low and assumed our fallen nature, that He might take hold of us and raise us to new life.

So awesome and beautiful is this mystery that I think it can only be expressed in words of poetry and praise. The nineteenth-century English Jesuit priest Gerard Manley Hopkins did so very well:

Moonless darkness stands between.
Past, the Past, no more be seen!
But the Bethlehem-star may lead me
To the sight of Him Who freed me
From the self that I have been.
Make me pure, Lord: Thou art holy;
Make me meek, Lord: Thou wert lowly;
Now beginning, and always:
Now begin, on Christmas day.

I wish all of you a blessed and regenerative Christmas.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chris Dow" with a small plus sign to the right.

Rev. Chris Dow