



CHRISTMAS: 'Love Among the Ruins'

God came into human existence and among human existence with all its limitations and flaws. Christmas is a potent sign of God's desire to embrace our brokenness. After all, Jesus is the Word made flesh who dwelt among us. *Among us*, not some paid actors in a play; *among us*, untrustworthy shepherds, people who didn't belong, like the Magi, the different, the oddball, and poor peasant parents... And it is no accident that such a God who desired to be with us as we are, with all our flaws, was born in a feeding station: He came to nourish our brokenness, heal our divisions, feed our hungry souls. Christmas truly shows us "Love Among the Ruins." (Fr. W. Bausch)

We know that it's hard to break early habits... the same is true for God. This child grew up and hadn't changed one bit. He was criticized for associating with the marginal, the outcasts, and those 'outside'. He broke bread and fed sinners and publicans and hypocrites too... He sees us as people with addictions. He had the courage to say: "I have come to call sinners, not the just." He sparred with a Samaritan woman at the well, gave a second chance to Zacchaeus, a corrupt person, actually touched an untouchable, a leper, and he died between two thieves. From the

cradle to the grave, “the Word has dwelt among us,” has been where we are. What a consistency!

The big question for you and me for Christmas is: Why don't we pay attention to all this? Why do we allow ourselves to fall for commercial sentimentality when all the while for Jesus “love is a harsh and dreadful thing.”

“The bells rang merrily as that Christmas dawn arrived and villagers trooped in happy procession to the early church service. It was Christ's mass, Christmas. ‘But not for us who are cut off from all humanity,’ the ragged prisoners wept, huddled together for comfort from the cold... When the service in church ended, a priest came to the prison, set up an altar, and began the service of worship. ‘Now God has come to us!’ the convicts shouted in surprised joy. ‘Oh, yes,’ replied the priest. ‘This is where he lives all year long. You see he goes to the cathedral there only on special occasions.’” (F. Dostoevsky)

The truth is, God lives all year long among us, but often, in practice, we deny it. We think we are beyond God's concern, care, and immense love. At a time affected by COVID-19, as we gather physically and/or spiritually on Christmas in a faith community where Jesus still comes humbly in his spoken word and in the size of a piece of bread, we know that he bends to shepherds, outcasts, and sinners. In Christmas God has fulfilled his desire to be near us, to be with us.

Christmas is the celebration of the Word made flesh, our flesh. It is the celebration of Love Among the Ruins.

May the Lord, shower his choicest blessings and much peace on you and your loved ones at Christmas, in the New Year 2021, and always.

With deep gratitude for the 'gift' of each of you, the Mission gifts you share with us, and remembering each other in prayer,

Sincerely Yours,

Fr. Mark s.x. and the Xaverian Missionaries