



Message for Christmas
25 December 2025
His Eminence Frank Cardinal Leo
Metropolitan Archbishop of Toronto

My dear brothers and sisters,

Praised be Jesus Christ and Merry Christmas to you and to your loved ones.

Each year the birth of our Saviour Jesus Christ invites us to delve deeper into the true meaning of the Incarnation, to ponder anew the mystery of God's love, and to renew or even seek new ways to serve our brothers and sisters because of Jesus and his teaching and example. The wonders of the Incarnation - God becoming man in Jesus - were first announced by the Archangel Gabriel nine months earlier at the Annunciation and are now fulfilled in the birth of the Messiah and as St John the Evangelist describes so eloquently, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). Heaven and earth are joined forever giving rise to the *foundation* of our **hope** because God, who loves us, is now united to humanity forever.

This year, as the Church celebrates a Holy Year, the Jubilee - a year of grace, forgiveness, and renewal - the light of Bethlehem shines with renewed meaning. The birth of Jesus can be seen as the first and perpetual Jubilee. It is God's great proclamation of mercy: where true freedom is realized, forgiveness abounds, and our relationship with God is restored forever. For this reason, Christmas is not only a feast we celebrate but a mystery we are called to enter into and experience. We live in hope because the Bethlehem event - Christ being born among us - is not simply a scene of tenderness but the *pledge of redemption*: God's faithfulness has a name - Jesus. From the manger to the altar, from Bethlehem to our families, parishes and different communities, God's nearness is not a mere memory of a long-ago event, far, far away but a living presence here among us, now. And his presence always sends us forth as disciples and missionaries to proclaim, "God saves", which is the very meaning of the name of Jesus.

As Pilgrims of Hope, we live in this world witnessing to the love and mercy of God, looking forward to the day when we will be with God forever in his eternal Kingdom. As Christians we do not offer the world a new ideology, theory, or philosophy. Rather, we reveal a new reality: **that God is with us, and his mercy for us endures forever**. With the Incarnation the way we relate to God has changed, we are no longer merely creatures, but his beloved children called to share in his divine life.



The name “Bethlehem” (*beit lehem*) literally “house of bread” offers us a rich theological and spiritual connection of God’s life, our life and the holy Eucharist. Indeed, from the beginning, the same love which is the Godhead, now lays in the manger in the flesh and would one day be placed upon the altar at Mass. Truly, the mystery of Christmas finds its continuation in the Eucharist insofar as we understand the Eucharist to be the promise of our future glory (cf. CCC 1402-1405). By this mystery we recall both Christ’s first coming in Bethlehem in flesh and anticipate his final return in glory - the “already and not yet” of Christian hope (cf. CCC 1818). As such, each time we celebrate the holy Eucharist, the horizon of hope opens before us. What began in Bethlehem continues on the altar and will be fulfilled in the heavenly banquet in eternity. The Eucharist keeps our eyes fixed not only on where God has come, but where he is leading us.

At every Mass, the same Divine Word that was made flesh in Our Lady’s heart and womb way back many years ago, becomes present to us again - but now sacramentally. The same Jesus whom Mother Mary held in her arms is now entrusted to us under the humble signs of bread and wine. The same divine humility that chose the manger to show himself to the world, chooses now and until his return the altar of sacrifice at Mass. The same mercy that came to shepherds and strangers comes to each and every one of us. In the Eucharist, the Incarnation is not just remembered but renewed, made present, and given to all. The God who once drew near to us, walked among us, and taught us, is now given to us to dwell within us in holy communion. The Eucharist is the living sign that God’s nearness endures. When we gather around the altar in our parishes and communities for Mass, we are drawn into the same mystery that gathered shepherds around the crib in Bethlehem. We, too, come in our poverty - carrying our fears, our failures, our hunger for meaning, our hopes, dreams and deepest desires - and we find that Christ is waiting for us, because he loves us personally and by name. For St. Francis of Assisi, the stable becomes the sanctuary, the feeding trough becomes the table of life, and the Eucharist is foreshadowed at the Nativity. (Thomas of Celano, *Book 1 Life of St Francis*, 85:469; St Cyril of Alexandria, *Sermon I, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 2:1-7*).

This Christmas, let us make room again for the Child Jesus who comes with peace. Let our **families** be havens of love and understanding; our **parishes** be places of welcome and care; our **communities** become schools of compassion and outreach; and our **hearts** tabernacles of transforming mercy. The Word still becomes flesh - in every act of faith, every gesture of love, every Sunday Eucharist - and then sends us forth to serve God by serving one another. May this holy season renew in us the **joy** of belonging and being loved and the **courage** to share that love with those the Lord puts on our path. God bless you and your family abundantly and powerfully this Christmas season.