



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Christ is born to us, let us rejoice in the day of our salvation!

Pope Francis said in his first Christmas homily as Bishop of Rome, "Let us open our hearts to receive the grace of this day, which is Christ himself. A day of mercy, in which God our Father has revealed his great tenderness to the entire world. A day of light, which dispels the darkness of fear and anxiety. A day of peace, which makes reconciliation. A day of joy: a 'great joy' for the poor, the lowly and for all the people."

On this day, Jesus, the Savior, is born of the Virgin Mary. The manger became a symbol of humility and a great demonstration of the Father's love for us. Instead of a royal palace, Jesus was born in a simple manger. From the beginning, Our Lord showed what has real value: not the building of birth, but the people who occupied that building. Jesus values family, strangers, kings, and shepherds. All came to worship and adore Him. As we celebrate His birth, let us spiritually come and bow down by the crib.

With the shepherds, let us bow down before the Lamb, let us worship God's goodness made flesh, and let us allow tears of repentance to fill our eyes and cleanse our hearts.

What gift will we bring to the infant? Will it be a new and deeper commitment to seeking out the Lord, like the shepherds? Will it be recognizing the true King, like the Magi? The earthly royalty knew that they needed to bow down to the heavenly King. They gave to Jesus gifts of respect, acknowledging that the One before them is worthy of all honors. Do we also recognize the Lord by bringing Him our gifts of service, commitment, and love?

Again, Pope Francis said, "Today, then, let us together rejoice in the day of our salvation. As we contemplate the crib, let us gaze on the open arms of Jesus, which show us the merciful embrace of God, as we hear the cries of the Child who whispers to us: 'for my brethren and companions' sake, I will say: Peace be with you.'"

My gift to you is my prayer that God will continue to shower His peace, mercy, care and love upon you and your family; that you will be a beacon of hope to all those who are in your lives; that people will encounter Jesus, as the best gift of all, through you. Know of my prayers; please keep me in yours.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year,