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His Holiness, Pope Benedict, Sends Christmas Greeting To America

(The Press and Publicity Department of the National Catholic Welfare Council has Received by Cable from His Holiness, Pope Benedict XV, the Following Christmas Greetings to the Catholic Newspapers, to the Faithful and to the whole American people.)

With the utmost satisfaction we take the opportunity of the approaching sweet Christmas time to send our paternal greetings to the newspapers adherent to the National Catholic Welfare Council of the United States of America, and through them to the faithful, and to the whole American people.

We heartily wish that the said newspapers, under the wise and paternal guide of the Episcopate, may develop ever more widely their action for the good of the people and the defense of the patrimony of doctrine and charity held by the Catholic Church for the benefit of humanity.

Well acquainted with the serious purposes of American Catholics and their devotion towards this Apostolic See, while we send to them our paternal benediction we express the wish that their activity in the fertile field of the press may bear ever more abundant fruits and, like the Evangelical mustard seed, grow into a strong and mighty tree which under the shadow of its branches will gather all the souls searching after truth, all the hearts beating for the good.—Benedict XV P. M.



POPE BENEDICT XV

When Christ our Lord was born in Bethlehem herald angels sang great songs of joy across the midnight sky; and a glowing star of hope led the wise men of the ancient world to His side, where they met the humble toilers of the fields, and all was peace, and happiness and love.

As it was merely two thousand years ago, so now it is. Again the Holy Child comes to the children of men, who are also the children of God and therefore the brothers of Christ. He is then the center of hope, the fountain of joy—Love indestructible and all powerful. Around Him gather all truly wise men, all the mighty leaders who have seen His Star in the East, and with them kneel the humble toilers, the lowly ones, the poor whom He so tenderly loved when He was among us in the flesh.

Yet, nearly two thousand years ago, while the angels sang great songs of joy across the midnight sky, and the wise ones knelt together with the lowly toilers in true brotherhood beside that awful Cradle, there was deep night not only over Bethlehem, but over all the world. The Roman Empire and all the minor pagan kingdoms of the earth were ruling in triumphant dreadfulness over the bodies and the minds and the very souls of nearly all mankind. Frightful poverty mingled with even more dreadful and destructive luxury. The world was steeped in a sickness of superstition. The symbols of the deadliest of sins were set up as idols and worshipped as God. Wars and revolts, pestilence and famine, mingled in a dance of death with the pomps of power and the haughty processions of the proud who ruled the humble folks as slaves.

But the Holy Child, the little helpless baby of Bethlehem, overturned these mighty empires, swept away the pomps of tyrannical power, and Christianity succeeded Paganism. Sometimes it would seem that the world today is much the same as that world two thousand years ago. Sometimes it would seem to be even worse. But such a thought is only a whisper from the dark spirit of depressing doubt. It is especially false at Christmastide. The two thousand years have elapsed since our Lord lay in the lap of Holy Mary, His Immaculate Mother, has not gone by in vain. God's work knows no failure. The uncounted millions of saints, who have glorified God and proven the great capacities of mankind; the foundational changes for the better that have become part of the structure of human society since that first Christmas Day, and the present strength and power and unflinching faith of the Universal Church throughout the world are part only of manifold considerations which give defiance to pessimism, and which bid us listen to the same great-song of joy which the angels sing this Christmas, even as they sang across the skies of midnight two thousand years ago.

Let us kneel, then, at the Cradle of the Holy Child, the wise and the great, the rich and the powerful, and the humble toilers of the poor—all partakers of the peace, the happiness, and the love promised to all men of good will, and held together in that true Brotherhood of Man which is only possible when we acknowledge and live under the Fatherhood of God—the Fatherhood everlastingly proven by the birth of Jesus Christ.

PLANS FOR CATHOLIC PRESS MONTH

Plans for the National Catholic Press Month, in March, are now being formed by the Press Department of the National Catholic Welfare Council at Washington, D. C. Bishop Russell, Chairman of the Department, has invited suggestions as to practical ideas for the promotion of this vast campaign from the editors and readers of the Catholic paper. It is to be hoped that the Catholic clergy and the faithful laity, officially and unofficially, will do all things in their power to make a memorable success of the campaign.

Cardinal Gibbons Sees New Light Piercing the Darkness of the Age

By JAMES CARDINAL GIBBONS

We ought to rejoice particularly on this Christmas occasion because once again is the world reminded that Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our God, became man for our sakes, and lived for us, and worked for us, and thought for us, and prayed for us, and suffered for us, and died for us—and for us rose again from the grave, triumphant over pain and sorrow and failure and death, and ascended into Eternal Life, tracing its pathway for all of us.

We should thank Him and praise Him for that He shows us not only the safe way through the perils and miseries of time unto the bliss of everlasting joy, but also for that He points out the way whereby we may find egress from the crowding and baffling problems of the age and arrive at a just and stable condition of civilization here and now.

"Peace upon earth to all men of good will!" was the message of the herald angels who announced His coming, and that promise has never failed, will never fail, and cannot fail, for God's words are creative Truth.

Good will it is which is the condition of peace upon earth; good will is the substance of the Christian religion on its human side; and good will means a true willingness to be just, and to be charitable. Justice and Charity are the twin pillars of Christian civilization. They are set up in the hearts and the minds and the souls of Christ's followers, and if Christians are true to the principles of Justice and Charity, they will lighten the whole world with the spirit of Christ; they will reflect the light of Christ throughout the darkest places and will accomplish their one great duty in life, namely, to love the Lord God and His children, their fellow men.

Let us rejoice that the great war's terrible aftermath of private sorrow and public calamity shows signs of being lessened, and that the light of hope may be discerned through the darkness of the age. Particularly in our own dear land do we perceive this light, and if we are true to its inspiration we may extend its blessings to other nations less favored by Almighty God. I face our future not only without apprehension, but with unshaken faith in our American institutions, because they are based upon the message of Christianity.

SECRET OF CHRIST'S WORK

The birth of our Blessed Lord was known to a lowly and unknown few. Today the cave and the cradle, the Mother and the Child, are exalted in song and story all over the earth. The Child has become the living Saviour. The knowledge and love of Him have revolutionized the world. He came in lowliness; He lived untrumpeted; unadvertised, unknown. Yet He is the greatest force and power in the world today.

Much will be written and read about Christ and Christianity and the Christian spirit. Our practical Christian faith and love may be tested by our belief in His example. Do we believe that if we remain unknown, unheralded, unpraised, we also will achieve most? To shun praise and adulation, to forego flattery, to give up selfishness—seem to court ineffectiveness and failure, and the world believes they do. The modern electric display is to the progressives of the day advancement and success: the Star of Christmas night is a stumbling block and foolishness.

Advertisement is the order of human nature. It is characteristic of business. It is also characteristic of the human soul. Indeed the hardest thing for us to do is to remain unknown. Try it and see. Not to be thought well of, not to be prominent among our own for some gift or talent, not to be praised and admired—why when these be not, life seems hardly worth the living. And to be denied credit that is justly due us, to be misrepresented—these are unbearable. So the sweet lesson of Christ's emptying of Himself is not altogether sweet—for us who would follow it. It was given in the darkness; in secret and in the interior of our soul it must be learned and lived. To live in anything like a cave when there are so many inviting open places runs against our grain. To let our works speak for themselves and ourselves to keep silent is the secret of Christ's work and Christ's perfect achievement. Our life must be hidden in Him. The larger, better life, which everyone yearns to possess cannot be found in publicity, in fame or in friends. It can be found in Christ. And that is why all humanity can acclaim and know a Saviour on Christmas Day.

THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT

The giving of gifts is a characteristic of Christmas. During Christmastide generous impulses gain sway in every heart susceptible of affection for family, friends and fellow-man.

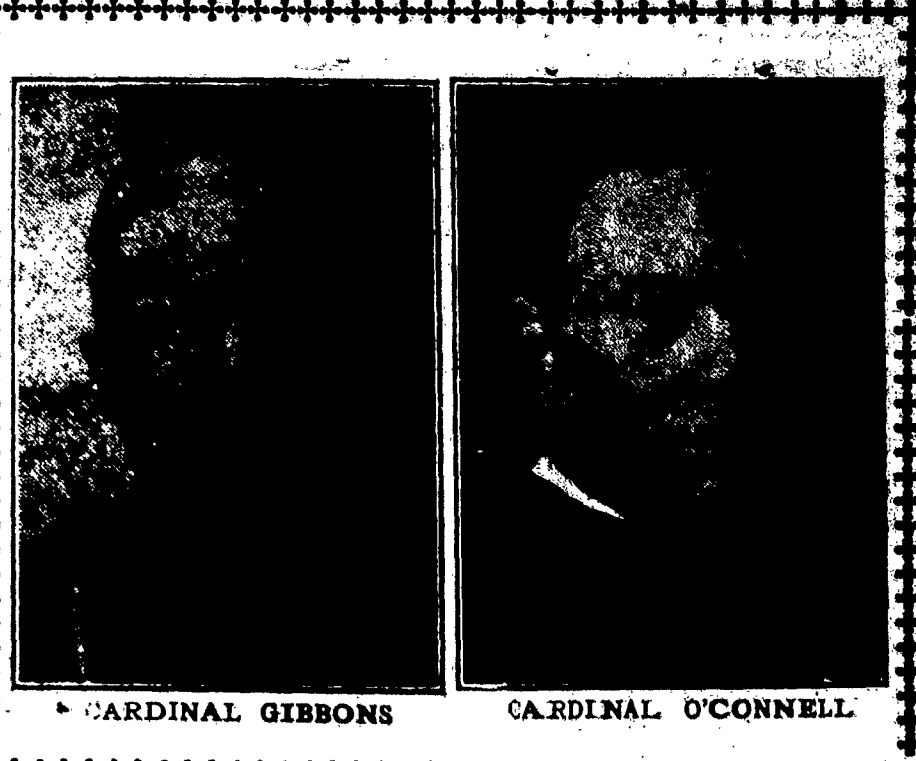
There is no other day in the whole year during which happiness and content so generally prevail among the men, and women and children of Earth. And the explanation of this universally diffused felicity is to be found in the fact that on this day all men of good will let love and kindness dictate their attitude toward others. Selfishness, if not entirely banished from their being, is put under the subjection of a truly Christian spirit.

On Christmas day no man of good will asks, Am I my brother's keeper? He is willing to concede—for the day at least—that he is. With many the feeling of the responsibility of brotherhood is so strong that they seek out the unfortunate to bring them good cheer but even among those in whom the inclination to show kindness to others is not so compelling as to induce them to go out of the way to do a kind deed, there are a few who reject an opportunity thrust upon them to make a fellow-being just a little happier. And according to the measure of happiness they give to others does joy fill their own breasts.

It is a profound truth that no one has truly learned to live until he has learned to give. Giving is no less the law of life than it is the commandment of God, from whom all life proceeds. No man is sufficient unto himself. It is through the coming of the rain and the warmth of the sun—gifts of God—that the earth is fructified and made capable of sustaining life, and it is through love of God—the Supreme Giver—and of our fellow human-beings that the spirit of man is nourished, and develops the strength and beauty which fill it for eternal life in the divine radiance of its Creator.

When a doctor of the law asked Jesus which was the great commandment in the law, Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.

Love of God and love of one's fellow-man, therefore, is the key note of celestial accordance and of human harmony. Christmas is the feast of love—divine and human. Oh, that the happiness which reigns in the hearts of men the world over on this Christmas day through the sway of love—love of God and love of fellow-man—should teach all men how true peace on Earth is to be achieved, and Heaven ultimately attained!



CARDINAL GIBBONS CARDINAL O'CONNELL

Cardinal O'Connell Says Christ Child Still Leads the World on Christmas

By WILLIAM CARDINAL O'CONNELL

Over nineteen hundred years ago, in a cave in the hart of the hills of Bethlehem, Mary, the Mother of God, "brought forth her first-born and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger."

The Word was made flesh and came to dwell amongst us. The heavens shone with glory and resounded with the song of angel choirs. A few shepherds, to whom the Lord had announced tidings of great joy, knelt in reverence to the Saviour of mankind. Heaven and earth were united in the angelic message of "Peace on earth to men of good will."

To the Infant Christ, in the humility of the manger, the shepherds gave full possession of their hearts for they were the children of God. The little Child of Bethlehem came to His own and His own gladly received Him. There was no room for Him in the inn at Bethlehem, but here was welcome, peace and adoration in the hearts of those who had been awaiting the fulfillment of the Words of the Prophet.

Pity, indeed, it were, if that welcome, peace and adoration was but for a day, and that Bethlehem should grow cold to the hearts of men. But the coming of the Christ Child was not to be in vain. The infant in swaddling clothes was to warm for all time the hearts of those who would not follow Him.

Down through the course of the centuries the host of shepherds multiplied and each recurring Christmas found at the crib of Bethlehem the increasing homage of a joyful world. The love of Christ was to endure forever for the gates of hell could not prevail against it. Man could not but surrender his heart to Him who was to bring redemption.

Satan and the powers of darkness waged a constant war, and though at times victory seemed about to set upon their banners, the "light that shone in the darkness" has blinded and scattered them.

In our own time the world has felt the shock of Satan's cohorts. For a time she seemed stunned—hatred, dissension and envy appeared about to crush her, but once again she is turning her face toward Bethlehem and is picking and weaving the frayed threads of Christian charity and fraternal co-operation that once more she may put on the mantle of her Creator.

May the coming Christmas bring to humanity a lasting recognition of the only hope of salvation and a complete conversion to "The Way, the Truth and the Life."

On Christmas the Christ Child is leading, it is the day of incarnate love, the day that made us brothers in Christ, the day which fills our hearts with the peace of heaven. That peace, and that peace alone, has left the impress of true happiness on the world throughout the long, long years. It will never fail to warm the hearts of the children of light and be to them an inspiration and a benediction.

THE HIGHEST PHILANTHROPY

Early in December announcement was made by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., of the amounts which his father has given in aid of education and by way of charity. Four hundred and seventy-five million was the staggering total.

Ignoring the question as to whether any man should be permitted to accumulate and control so vast a fortune, Mr. Rockefeller certainly deserves praise for the philanthropic use he has made of his great wealth.

But is Mr. Rockefeller in truth, as so many of the newspapers in making the announcement of his splendid gifts declared him to be, the world's greatest philanthropist?

Coincidentally with the publication of Mr. Rockefeller's unequalled pecuniary generosity in support of philanthropic projects, there was exhibited in Washington motion pictures taken by Father Vandenberg in the interior of Africa, showing the work of the black sisters in caring for the black lepers.

These noble women, most of them highly cultured and of a charm which would have warranted expectation of all the good things which women may attain in life—love, motherhood and luxury—turned their backs upon it and elected to spend their lives in the African jungles among the most unattractive and most awfully afflicted of the human race.

Mr. Rockefeller has given hundreds of millions, but he has retained millions for his own comfort and luxury and is spending his life at ease among those whom he loves and who love him.

These White Sisters, in remote, wild lands, far from family and friends, among savages, with scarcely any comforts and no luxuries are devoting their lives to comforting and consoling those shunned of all mankind.

The newspapers give a great display to the praiseworthy philanthropy of Mr. Rockefeller. But how seldom there is even a mention of the heroic sacrifice of these noble women who have consecrated their lives to Christ and the care of the most miserable, pulsive and forsaken of his creatures.

The newspapers view is the unreflective human view. In anyone, in the light of comparison, hold that this humanity of the respective philanthropies cited will...