



ARCHDIOCESE OF CHICAGO

December 2009

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

When a child is born, one has to give him or her a name. What is he to be called? Jesus had a name long before he was born of the Virgin Mary. From all eternity, he is the Word of God. Many centuries before the Word was made flesh, those waiting for him gave him other names. The Prophet Isaiah recalls several of them: Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. The names tell us who he is: a sign of hope amidst the darkest periods of human history, the fulfillment of the promise made by God to the House of David.

When a child is born, one asks again: Whom does he resemble? Does he look like his mother or perhaps like his paternal grandfather? St. Paul, in his letter to Titus says that Jesus resembles God. Jesus is the manifestation of God to us; and he himself would say just days before his death: "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father." This will be most evident, St. Paul reminds us, when Jesus returns in glory: "our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

When a child is born, parents often contemplate his or her future: What might this child do? Will he or she be a doctor, or lawyer or a teacher or perhaps answer God's call to religious life? St. Luke's Gospel, tells us that Jesus acts like God because he comes to save us from our sins. "Today, in the city of David, a Savior has been born for you!"

When a child is born, everything in a family changes. Not just the family routine and the priorities of the child's parents: the world is forever changed because a new creation of God now lives among us, is now part of us. This Christmas, as we look at the baby in the manger and hear angels singing and see shepherds adoring, we know that God has come among us; the Eternal Word is made flesh. A child has been born. It is Christ, our Savior. And our world is changed forever.

You and your intentions will be remembered in my Christmas Masses and prayers; please keep me and the needs of the Archdiocese of Chicago in yours. God bless you and Merry Christmas!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Francis Cardinal George, O.M.I.
Archbishop of Chicago