



December 25, 2012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus,

Today, we open the cover of the greatest epic you and I will ever encounter: that of God's immense love for each one of us. During the Christmas season, we are introduced once again to the dramatic story of Mary and Joseph, two people who were asked to make an extraordinary leap of faith. Mary, a young woman, engaged to Joseph, was chosen to become the mother of Our Savior, to which she willingly assented. Joseph himself, a carpenter, welcomed the pregnant Virgin Mary as his wife, despite all societal pressure to cast her off. Jesus, the Lord of Heaven and Earth, was born in a humble manger.

Yes, we all know the Christmas story, the reason for celebrating the coming of the Infant Jesus each year on this day. Yet, as the late Archbishop John F. Whealon wrote, "...Bethlehem is only the beginning of the story of salvation in Christ. For many, regrettably, it is also the end. We must go beyond it, to the later, greater chapters. If we do not, the greatest story ever told becomes the shortest story ever told, and the saddest." But what about the rest of the story? Do we continue to read as Mary and Joseph flee to Egypt with the Infant Jesus? Do we accompany Christ as He grows up, performs His first miracle, attracts many disciples, suffers death and dies innocently on the Cross for our sins, and on the third day rises again?

Christmas is the opening chapter in the story of our salvation. I invite you to join with me in continuing to walk with Christ, not only on Christmas, but on every day of our lives.

Yes, this Christmas Season and every day in the New Year, through prayer, the sacraments and charitable outreach, may we let the Infant Savior dwell in our hearts through faith, and may we then invite everyone to let Him dwell in their hearts as well. In this way, we become heralds of the New Evangelization, pointing to the one Savior of the world, Who alone can satisfy the deepest longings of the human heart!

Merry Christmas! Know that you and your family and loved ones will be in my prayers in a particular way on this day when Christ was born for us and for our salvation.

Faithfully in the Heart of Christ,

+ Paul S. Loverde

Most Reverend Paul S. Loverde
Bishop of Arlington