



My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

## Merry Christmas!

What a blessing that we are able to celebrate the birthday of God! God the Son – the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, God from God, Light from Light, True God from True God – chose to enter into our humanity, on a particular day in a particular place. He chose to unite humanity to His Divinity! Now, for ever after, human nature will be united to the Divine.

This is what we celebrate – God becoming one of us. While this union of Divinity and humanity does not mean all of our problems have disappeared, it does show us that He has chosen to be with us – to walk with us – through our problems. God is not watching us from a distance; God is not afar off. While His Divinity is infinitely greater than us, He chooses to humble Himself and come close to us. Why? Because for some bizarre reason, He is madly in love with you and with me!

In the midst of the hustle and bustle, in the midst of parties, gifts and food, I invite you to take some time to ponder and pray over this truth: God's overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love for *you*. His love is not a vague, general love for all humanity – as we might have for "those people" far from us. His love is the very personal love of someone who knows you intimately, who knows all of your wounds and scars, all of your virtue and vice, and loves you through it all. He became human in order to get "into-our-skin close to us" and show us that love. Ponder that personal love He has for you. Pray to be able to receive that love more and more each day. Ask for the grace to love yourself as He loves you!

May your day be "merry and bright," but above all, may it be filled with the love of God and love of those around you.

Peace be with you this holy day, and with all who love the Lord in simplicity of heart.

Grace and Peace,

*Fr. Von*