



**Chapter Christmas 2022**  
**EMMANUEL**  
**God's Love/Inward Journey/Winter Fire**



Very dear Sisters and Friends,

The season of Advent is over and the period of expectation is complete. Now it is time to celebrate the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. During the Christmas season, the readings of the liturgy invite us to meditate on the birth of the Lord from different perspectives. The Gospels tell different but complementary stories about Jesus' birth, the Incarnation, and the salvation that Jesus brings to the world. For our reflections this year, we shall dwell on insights from the Gospel according to St. John.

Christmas is all about the gift of God's loving presence with us – Emmanuel. John's Gospel reveals that the Incarnation is nothing but God's self-emptying love becoming flesh in Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 1:14). "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life" (Jn 3:16). Christmas thus reminds us of God's profound love for each one of us and of our right and duty to share in God's life. God's love is the source of all that exists. It is a divine spark that is present within everything. Mystics would say God's love is present within every breath, within every fibre of our body, within the whole of creation.



Sadly, however, we live in a culture dominated by much selfishness and greed. We are fed never-ending desires and needs by advertisements; we are sometimes controlled and defined by social media; we are often confused not knowing whom to trust and what to believe. And sometimes we forget that life is sacred and love is eternal. At such a time it is especially important to return to what is essential and true, what cannot be bought or sold. Christmas this year invites us to return to the source of our life – God's immense love.

Like oil in the seed, the Divine/Absolute is hidden in our hearts. We are called to turn inward to that dwelling place of God within us. It is through an "inward gaze" that we get in touch with our true selves that share in the divine life. This is where we fashion and refashion, imagine and recreate a healthy and happy "inner world". It is through this soul-searching that we discover deeper connections. The "divine spark" within us manifests itself in different ways. We have personal experiences of being blessed by the goodness and generosity of others. Let us celebrate Christmas this year by recognizing this divine spark within us and appreciating the goodness around us.

As we grapple with global problems of hate and violence, let us take that "inward journey" to be in touch with the divine born in our hearts and find within us that inner joy and everlasting peace which the world cannot give. Christ did not come to stay in the manger, but in our

hearts, in our families, in our communities, in our world. Let us embrace Christmas this year as an opportunity to cherish the divine presence and from there to create a better atmosphere in our families, communities, and places of ministry.

In the present context, it is extra difficult to show ourselves as men and women made in the image and likeness of God. We struggle and fail. We lose jobs, friends, family and community members, and we risk losing faith and hope. We witness unbelievable events unfolding in the news and become fearful and insecure. There are times for us when everything seems cloaked in darkness. We long for light. Referring to the coming of Jesus, John the evangelist announces: “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world” (Jn 1:9). Jesus came to enlighten us, to empower us, to heal us. Christmas this year invites us to take the light of Christ into our hearts and to be a source of light and inspiration to one another.

When life feels especially grim, or when we feel particularly powerless in the face of the world’s troubles, we can be channels of encouragement and hope. It is not that we solve all problems, but we can make a difference through many small acts of grace and kindness daily given and received. As someone said: “Christ is not only the summer sun for the prosperous but also the winter fire for the unfortunate.” We can indeed become the “winter fire” for one another, especially for the less privileged ones. Simple acts of loving kindness, an open heart that listens, and hands that care for someone in need will make Christmas real for many.



The Christmas message is all about overcoming darkness and hopelessness from within and giving people hope and courage to take both small steps and long strides forward. Let us integrate more and more these Christmas values and attitudes in our lives and radiate Christmas joy and peace as we wish each other a ‘Merry Christmas’!

Every prayer for a joyful Christmas and a blessed New Year – 2023!

*Rekha Chennattu*

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