

## **THE WORD OF GOD'S LOVE**

**Bishop Ricardo Ramirez, C.S.B.**

When Jesus was born the angels sang, "Peace on earth, good will to men!" Today we have to add the inclusive words, "and to women." The coming of the Word of God to the world announces God's ultimate desire: peace and good will. Yet as we gaze upon our world today, we see how much we fall short of those ideals: war, division, and polarization among people. We often fail to recognize good will among the inhabitants of today's world.

I hear more and more that we have never been so divided and that mean spiritedness rules the day. Our country and indeed the rest of the world are divided along political, economic, religious and moral lines. We struggle to find common ground among the issues of our day: health care, immigration, war, nuclear armaments, abortion and climate change. In an age replete with communications technology we are not communicating, perhaps because we fail at the fundamental rule of communication, that of listening. We do listen, but only to those with whom we agree; we listen only to the talk shows on radio and television that reinforce our cemented biases and mindsets. We live in a time when we refuse to listen to those with whom we vehemently disagree.

To this world of cacophony and contention, comes the message of Christmas through a child lying in a manger. This child is God's communication to us, and is the ultimate vehicle for God's message to us. This child coming into the world is the most important word ever enunciated from anyone; it is the most meaningful and the most powerful of words.

We are reminded that it was by his word that creation took place. "Then God SAID, 'Let there light...'" let there be earth and sea, fish, birds, and all kinds of creatures.

The word God speaks at Christmas is basically a word of love, an unending, eternal, consistent, never-failing, unconditional, incomparable love. It takes a humble heart to receive the Word of love, for it is only in surrender to that love that we are able to be transformed and renewed from within. That is what is meant by "opening up our hearts to him."

His message of love does not end with ourselves alone; if it is truly heard and embraced, it unavoidably goes out to others: in service, generosity, compassion and forgiveness.

In spite of the polarizations of our time, there are things happening in our world that give us hope. Nations recently came together to join in the phenomenon of climate change. There is good news from Rwanda where the people have joined efforts to improve health among their people, especially among women. In our local area in southern New Mexico, I see many youths reaching out to others, joining their talents to bring joy to the rest of the community. During the month of December young people are everywhere dancing and singing, as is exemplified in the Christmas religious and social traditions. To

**me these tell me that the best of the human spirit is alive and that we can therefore sing  
“Peace on earth good will to men...and women!”**

**I close with the words of St. Peter Chrysologus who lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> century:**

**“God saw the world falling to ruin because of fear and immediately acted to call it  
back with love. God invited it by grace, preserved it by love, and embraced it with  
compassion.”**

**Merry Christmas everyone!**