

Christmas 2018

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

The chaos of Bethlehem during a census, when all who traced their heritage to the city of David returned to be counted, must have been overwhelming to residents and visitors alike. We can imagine how this might have been for Mary and Joseph, migrant parents, internalizing, as all parents do, the vulnerability of their newborn child. How, they might well have wondered, did they possibly count?

Into the chaos and uncertainty of our own day does God come, again and again, incarnating in the most vulnerable of lives and contexts the unfailing love of Christ Jesus, showing, through acts of mercy, grace, compassion, kindness, and justice, that in the divine economy, all count. No exceptions.

It is by our hands that the hungry are fed, by our sharing that the naked are clothed, by our words that the disconsolate are comforted, by our prayers that the disheartened find encouragement, and by our arms that the lonely come to know the embrace of the One who loves them without condition. Know that you are held in that same holy embrace, and also in my prayers, as we gather by the stable of new birth in adoration and thanksgiving.

With every Christmas blessing,

The Rt. Rev. Mark Hollingsworth, Jr.  
Bishop of Ohio

12.25.18

He slept,  
wrapped in rags, straw, and his parents' devotion.

The first holy breaths,  
soft and shallow,  
stirred the air no more than a Monarch's wing,  
while news of his fragile presence  
fanned Herod's monarchial conceit to murderous rage.

Minute fingers,  
instinctively reaching for security,  
began to feel, for the first time,  
the brokenness of the world  
he had been born to heal

and would die to save.

Only the angels might have known  
how his soft cry,  
calling for his mother's breast,  
would come to give voice  
to the divine hunger for justice and thirst for righteousness,  
his tiny heartbeat, setting the metronome of love.

Mark Hollingsworth, Jr.  
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