

THE HOLY LAND



BETHLEHEM

"BUT YOU, O BETHLEHEM EPHRATHAH,
WHO ARE TOO LITTLE TO BE AMONG
THE CLANS OF JUDAH,
FROM YOU SHALL COME FORTH FOR ME
ONE WHO IS TO BE RULER IN ISRAEL..."
(MICAH 5:2)



My dear fellow Pilgrims,

"We descend into the crypt. This is the grotto of the Nativity [of our Lord], where Mary gave birth to her

firstborn Son. This is where God, a frail newborn, presented himself to man, where he revealed his face. This is where the shepherds recognized the Messiah in the Infant in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. This is where the Magi adored, where they offered the gold of royalty, the incense of divinity, and the myrrh of the Passion".

Bethlehem is the small town in which Jesus was born. He came to tell the people about the meaning of peace; he came to save His people from the bondage of sin and violence. He came to give the message of love; Jesus came as a baby to show people the meaning of life, of being together in the pilgrimage of life.

The Prince of Peace is born into one of the most troubled lands on earth - this is powerful - this is significant. Peace is born in the chaos; light burst forth in darkness. Hope comes in the most doubtful and confused times - we have faith in God. In those days, and up to today, Jesus invites us to Bethlehem - to open the doors of our hearts to Him.

In Bethlehem, they say that "Everyday is Christmas..." I say that, for each of us, we can find "Bethlehem" in each of our hearts even today. In Bethlehem, everyday is an invitation from God to the message of Christ - to live the experience of the "first Bethlehem" - to start *a new* Christmas with Him every single day. Every day is an opportunity to open our heart to the invitation of the Son of God. So then, we can truly say: "In Bethlehem, we meet Jesus Christ; everyday is Christmas".

Merry CHRISTMAS.

Your pilgrim priest,
Fr JC Merino