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*“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to those on whom his favor rests.”
(Luke 2:14)*

Holy Scripture tells us that with these words the angels announced the birth of Jesus to shepherds watching their flocks at night. The angels did not announce the coming of the Christ to the religious or political leaders of the time, but rather to ordinary people, people who for all intents and purposes were of little or no consequence in that time and place; people with little or no social standing to speak of.

In so doing, they set the tone for Jesus’ life. From the first moments of his life on earth, Jesus heralds a new order, one in which the economically disadvantaged and the socially disenfranchised are made welcome, are validated, are told that on them God’s favor rests.

Jesus’ message to our world is one of radical inclusivity. All people have equal value and equal worth in His Father’s and Mother’s Realm. No one is less than, no one is greater than, anyone else. The external circumstances of a person’s life are of no consequence to Christ; Christ sees beyond them and sees the presence of the Father and Mother within all humanity and indeed, within all creation.

At Christmastime as we celebrate the birth of the historic personage, Jesus of Nazareth, the Eternal Christ, we also celebrate the birth of the Christ Consciousness within all humanity. Seeing as Christ does, we are called to heal all the divisions that separate us from each other and that ultimately separate us from God. We are tasked with the enormous challenge of seeing Christ in our political enemies, whoever they may be; in those who think or act or look or worship differently than we do; in those whose lifestyle we find offensive; in those who suffer from chronic or incurable disease; in those who are poor or not as socially acceptable as we would like to think ourselves to be. To perpetuate these divisions is to sow the seeds of violence; to see beyond them is to sow the seeds of peace.

Christ came to us as the Prince of Peace and for all of us who follow the Way of the Christ, the work of peace must be our constant task. That work starts within us; as we let go of our prejudices, our judgments and our self-centeredness, we prepare a

place for Christ and his message of peace and hope to be born again into our world. I encourage you, dear brothers and sisters, to open your hearts to his peace during this blessed season, that like the angels of old, your lives may continually give glory to God in the highest.

I would like to take this opportunity to extend to you my sincere wishes for a blessed and merry Christmas. May your hearts be filled with peace. May you become that peace for the world.

In Christ's peace,

**+Mark Elliott Newman, OC
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