



Anglican Network in Canada

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS from YOUR BISHOPS 2011

Dear Friends in Christ:

And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed.....Romans 12:2

Not only have my brother bishops empowered me to write this message on their behalf, but it is being sent to you without them having opportunity to see it in advance. That indicates a level of trust that I by no means *take for granted*.

In fact, *taking things for granted* is a theme I want to reflect upon in this brief message as we approach this glorious season. Because so much has been attached to the Festival that really has nothing to do with what we really are celebrating, it becomes easy for even the devout Christian to *take it for granted* and get so caught up in what the culture has transformed into something so completely foreign to what it really is meant to be.

When the media and so many people we know keep wishing us “Happy Holidays” it is so easy to *take it for granted* that this is what it is, forgetting that their word **holiday** is derived from our grand old word **Holy-Day**.

Sadly, we can *take for granted* that this is the way things are and there is no point in us trying to turn them into what they should be.

We are told in Scripture not to conform but to transform. But, I fear that conformity is a tremendous temptation when we are surrounded by so many aspects of this season that we not only *take for granted*, but we may even begin to feel that they are not so bad after all.

Let us remind ourselves that most of us in the Anglican Network in Canada are where we are this Christmastide, without buildings we loved and friends we once cherished, because we were not prepared to *take things for granted*. We had the courage to say that because we had to be faithful to Holy Scripture, we could not follow the path down which so many of our leaders were trying to take us. We had to take a stand that involved saying firmly that without that Baby in the manger, there was no other way by which we could be saved.

We knew the price making this stand would take, and came to realize the reality of what it means “to give and not to count the cost”. And most of us would willingly do it again.



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That experience, I believe, should embolden us as a Church to reclaim this Commemoration of “the birth in time of the timeless Son of God” for what it really is.

Because of what happened that first Christmas night, the world never would be the same again. And, when the impact of what really happened hits us, neither can we be the same again.

It is our prayer that as we gather around the manger, the enormity of His Love will so enflame our hearts and change our lives, that even while we celebrate we will share that message with others.

Your bishops and their wives (Stephen and Nona; Ron and Jan; Trevor and DeeDee; Charlie and Judy) join Trudy and me in sending our love and warmest greetings to each one of you, in whatever part of our extensive Diocese you may live. The shared love that comes with this greeting is another very special thing that none of us will ever *take for granted*.

*Come, strong men, and see
This high mystery,
Tread firm where the shepherds have trod,
And watch, mid the hair
Of the Maiden so fair,
The five little fingers of God**

Yours in the Infant Jesus,

The Right Reverend Donald F Harvey
Bishop and Moderator

* G. K. Studdert Kennedy The Unutterable Beauty