

CHRISTMAS - DECEMBER 25, 2014

"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST AND ON EARTH PEACE....."

THIS EVENING MARKS THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF 1914. WORLD WAR I HAD BEEN RAGING SINCE JULY OF 1914, WITH NO END IN SIGHT. EARLIER IN DECEMBER, POPE BENEDICT XV HIMSELF UNSUCCESSFULLY URGED A CEASE-FIRE DURING THE CRISTMAS SEASON.

BOTH SIDES HAD RECEIVED CHRISTMAS PACKAGES OF FOOD AND PRESENTS. THE CLEAR SKIES THAT ENDED THE RAIN FURTHER LIFTED THE SPIRITS ON BOTH SIDES.

THEN ON CHRISTMAS EVE, SOMEWHERE ON THE WESTERN FRONT - PROBABLY IN BELGIUM - BECAUSE THAT IS WHERE THEY ARE CELEBRATING THIS YEAR THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE TRUCE (I HEARD ABOUT IT ON WYSO - NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO RECENTLY) THE GERMANS SEEM TO HAVE MADE THE FIRST MOVE. DURING THE EVENING OF DECEMBER 24TH THEY DELIVERED A CHOCOLATE CAKE TO THE BRITISH LINE ACCOMPANIED BY A NOTE THAT PROPOSED A CEASE FIRE SO THAT THE GERMANS COULD HAVE A CONCERT. THE BRITISH ACCEPTED THE PROPOSAL AND OFFERED SOME TOBACCO AS THEIR PRESENT TO THE GERMANS. THE GOOD WILL SOON SPREAD ALONG THE 27 MILE LENGTH OF THE BRITISH LINE.

ENEMY SOLDIERS SHOUTED TO ONE ANOTHER FROM THE TRENCHES, JOINED IN SINGING CAROLS AND SOON MET ONE ANOTHER IN THE

MIDDLE OF THE NO-MANS-LAND TO TALK, EXCHANGE CHOCOLATE, CIGARETTES AND IN SOME AREAS TAKE PART IN IMPROMPTU SOCCER MATCHES....

AS YOU MIGHT EXPECT, THE HIGH COMMAND ON BOTH SIDES TOOK A DIM VIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES AND ORDERS WERE ISSUED TO STOP THE FRATERNIZING WITH VARYING RESULTS. IN SOME AREAS THE TRUCE ENDED CHRISTMAS DAY, IN OTHERS THE FOLLOWING DAY AND IN OTHERS IT EXTENDED INTO JANUARY.....

TO ME THIS CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF 1914 IS AN INCREDIBLE TESTIMONY TO THE POWER OF THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT TO BRING LOVE AND LIGHT AND JOY AND PEACE INTO OUR LIVES - EVEN IN THE MIDST OF HOSTILITY AND DARKNESS, SUFFERING AND EVIL.

THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT WAS ABLE TO STOP A RAGING WAR IN 1914- AND BRING ENEMIES TOGETHER - IF ONLY FOR A DAY OR SO....

100 YEARS LATER - IF WE LOOK CLOSELY, PERHAPS OUR LIVES ARE NOT COMPLETELY UNLIKE THOSE GERMAN AND BRITISH SOLDIERS IN THE TRENCHES...

WHAT DIFFERENCE CAN THE CHRISTMAS SPIRIT MAKE IN OUR LIVES? WHAT PEACE, WHAT JOY DO WE NEED TO BRING TO OUR LIVES IN THIS YEAR OF 2014? AND TO OUR LARGER WORLD?

IN WHAT AREAS OF OUR LIFE DO WE NEED TO STOP OUR FRENETIC AND DESTRUCTIVE PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR?

WHAT CEASE FIRE NEEDS TO HAPPEN?

***WHAT TRUCE DO WE NEED TO BRING ABOUT IN OUR LIVES AND HONOR
WITH A CHANGE IN OUR BEHAVIOR?***

***WHAT PEACE DO WE NEED TO MAKE? IN WHAT WAYS ARE WE CALLED TO
REACH OUT TO OTHERS, WHO MAY BE DIFFERENT THAN US....***

EVEN OPPOSED TO US

***HOW CAN WE BRING JOY AND MUSIC INTO THE LIVES OF OTHERS - IN
THE MIDST OF SUFFERING AND CONFUSION???***

***IN WHAT WAYS ARE WE CALLED TO STEP OUT INTO NO MAN'S LAND IN
OUR RELATIONSHIPS - AND SEEK GREATER HARMONY AND
COOPERATION....***

CAN WE PAUSE AND LEARN TO VALUE SILENCE???

***"CHRISTMAS IN THE TRENCHES" IS A BALLAD WRITTEN AND SUNG BY
JOHN MCCUTCHEON OF BOSTON ON HIS 1984 ALBUM WINTER SOLSTICE -
WE HEARD IT BEFORE MASS AS A PRELUDE AND YOU HAVE A COPY OF
THE WORDS IN YOUR PROGRAM....***

***THE BALLAD TELLS THE STORY OF THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE FROM THE
PERSPECTIVE OF A FICTIONAL BRITISH SOLDIER, FRANCIS TOLLIVER,
BUT THE EVENTS DEPICTED IN THE BALLAD ARE TRUE.***

I ESPECIALLY LOVE THE ENDING:

***THE FROZEN FIELDS OF FRANCE WERE WARMED AS SONGS OF PEACE
WERE SUNG.
FOR THE WALLS THEY'D KEPT BETWEEN US TO EXACT THE WORK OF
WAR,
HAD BEEN CRUMBLLED AND WERE GONE FOREVER MORE.***

*JOHN MCCUTCHEON MET SOME OF THE GERMAN SOLDIERS INVOLVED
IN THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE WHEN HE TOURED EUROPE IN THE 1980'S....
IN BOSTON IN 1988 THE BALLAD WAS THE MOST REQUESTED RECORDING
DURING THE HOLIDAYS ON SEVERAL FM STATIONS....*

*YOU CAN PROBABLY GUESS WHY THE BALLAD WAS SO POPULAR AND
MOVING FOR THE LISTENERS...*

*THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE STORY GOES AGAINST MOST OF WHAT WE'VE
BEEN TAUGHT ABOUT PEOPLE....*

*IT GIVES US A GLIMPSE OF THE WORLD AS WE WISH IT COULD BE AND
SAYS, "THIS REALLY HAPPENED ONCE"*

*IT IS LIKE HEARING THAT OUR DEEPEST WISHES REALLY ARE TRUE -
THE WORLD REALLY COULD BE DIFFERENT....*

*OF COURSE, OUR CELEBRATION OF CHRISTMAS THIS YEAR AND EVERY
YEAR REMINDS US THAT THE WORLD IS INDEED RADICALLY DIFFERENT
BECAUSE OF THAT BIRTH IN BETHLEHEM....*

*CERTAINLY, OUR MIND CANNOT WRAPPED ITSELF AROUND WHAT
CHRISTMAS MEANS - THE DIVINE BECAME HUMAN -*

WE CANNOT WRAP OUR MINDS AROUND THAT REALITY.....

HOW CAN THAT BE??

NO, CHRISTMAS IS A MATTER OF THE HEART - AS ONE POET HAS SAID:

OUR MINDS REEL AT THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATION

*WHEREAS OUR HEARTS THROB WITH JOY AND WONDER
(R. MORNEAU)*

TONITE OUR HEARTS ONCE AGAIN THROB WITH JOY AND WONDER.....

AND SO WE LOOK TO MARY AS OUR MODEL AND REMEMBER THAT:

"MARY KEPT ALL THESE THINGS, REFLECTING ON THEM IN HER HEART"

WE ALSO ARE ASKED TO KEEP ALL THESE THINGS, REFLECTING ON

THEM IN OUR HEARTS - HEARTS THROBBING WITH JOY AND WONDER

"GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST AND ON EARTH PEACE...."

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

***THERE ARE OVERWHELMING FORCES AGAINST IT/ BUT IT IS
INDOMITABLE***

***IT WILL NOT BE EXTINGUISHED/ IT KEEPS POPPING UP IN UNEXPECTED
PLACES***

***IT CAME TO DWELL AMONG US OVER 2,000 YEARS AGO/ IT HAS NOT LEFT
US/IT WILL NOT LEAVE US***

ULTIMATELY IT WILL TRIUMPH...

THIS IS WHAT WWE BELIEVE....THIS IS WHAT WE CELEBRATE TONITE