

Dear Friends,

The year of our Lord 2008 is now upon us, and many people make resolutions for the New Year, hoping to improve their lives. Sadly many of these resolutions are broken soon after they are made. However let us not lose heart but persevere and think how God has persevered and is persevering with us human beings.

Christmass and Epiphany are the finest examples of His loving and forgiving patience. Even though for centuries, from the very beginning of mankind, we have denied His will, disobeyed Him, and continually seek to go our own selfish way; even the people He chose through whom to reveal Himself as the Most Holy and undivided Trinity, the source and being of love, justice and forgiveness, over and over again betrayed Him in sinful corruption, selfishness, and the worship of false home-made gods. Yet in God's loving patience He persevered with them, and came into His own creation as Jesus Christ, the Eternal Word and Son of God, Second Person of the Most Holy and Undivided Trinity, through the virgin womb of Mary a humble God-fearing Hebrew Maid. Not only has God in the Babe of Bethlehem manifested and revealed His love to His own chosen people, as foretold by their prophets, but with the coming of the Gentile wise men, the Magi, and the acceptance of their gifts, He showed His love for all mankind, revealed His purpose for creation and opened the way for every human being to obtain His free gift of eternal life. It was for this purpose that God originally chose Abraham, that 'in thy seed,' whom we now know to be Jesus Christ, 'shall all nations of the earth be blessed.' (Gen. 22:18. AV)

Anyone who accepts Jesus as Lord and Saviour, repents of their sins and seeks His help and guidance to grow in holiness by becoming, through Baptism, a member of His Body in this world, the One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church, will receive His free gift of Eternal Life, and enjoy the bliss of God's Presence, with all the Saints in the Church Triumphant in heaven.

At the heart of the Christmass Story is the human Family, Mary the Virgin Mother, her husband St. Joseph the foster Father, gathered around the new born Baby, Jesus the Holy Child, in awe and wonder. At the heart of the Christian Life is the Christian Family, father, mother and children, blessed in the Sacrament of Marriage, living united together in mutual obligation of love and respect; and the wider Family the Church, gathered around the Altar to worship Jesus the Christ and receiving Him into themselves in Holy Communion, go out and bring others into that family by sharing with them the liberating Good News of Jesus Christ and His promised Salvation.

There is only one Family of God in this world, His Holy Church, or as St. Paul would put it 'There is one body, ... one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God ...etc. (Eph. 4:4). As we know Our Blessed Lord prayed to His Father that all who belong to Him as members of His Church should be completely united in one fellowship.

To disobey Him is to betray Him. Therefore let us use the week of Prayer for Christian Unity, which begins on Friday the 18th of January as a time for genuine and serious prayer to lead to action to fulfil Our Lord's Prayer and command, that all may be one, as He and His Father are one, united in His one Holy Church. We need to believe everything that He taught and revealed to us and recorded in the New Testament as a fulfilment of the Old Testament. Our Lord promised that He would send the Holy Spirit to guide His Church unto all truth. These truths are confirmed by the divinely inspired ecumenical councils and taught in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds.

The divisions in Christendom were and are caused and perpetuated by the sinfulness of men, and often by the inventing of doctrines to suit man's purpose, individually or corporately either through misunderstanding or evil determination. From time to time reformations may be necessary, but not as an end in itself, and should be from within and not from without and always based on the teachings of Scripture as interpreted through the guidance of God the Holy Spirit in the universal Councils of Christ's undivided Church. The end of such reforming must be for the unity of the Church.

Let us all resolve to use this New Year 2008 as a time for prayer and action to do all we can to reunite those who call themselves Christian. Jesus Christ is a true historical person and He established an historical Body which He called His Church, it is to this we must belong if we want to be His true disciples and live in His Presence both here and forever.

May I remind you that the purpose of this magazine is to remind ourselves of some of the Anglican writings down the centuries and the important contribution they made to the understanding of, and witnessing to, the Holy Catholic Church of Christ.

Thanks to those who have sent donations towards the cost of producing this magazine. As you know there is no charge for it but donations are gratefully received. It does help.

Please pray for Michael Clothier to be ordained a Deacon by Bishop Mercer CR on the 5th January at Loxbeare, nr. Tiverton, Devon; and also for his wife.

My wife and family join me in wishing you a happy and prosperous New Year, with God's richest blessings as you try to serve Him and further the Kingdom of Christ.

Your Priest & Friend, Fr. Brian.

*Note from the Webmaster: these letters from the Vicar General are part of his monthly paper magazine. There are copyright reasons why it is not appropriate to include the entire content of the magazine on the Internet.*