



FATHER ANTON'S WORDS OF WISDOM: In a few days it will be Christmas, a day we wait for all year long, it will come and go. Funny how we tend to forget that our life as Christians is something that is a part of us always; and not just for a few hours or a few days throughout the year. One of my favourite carols is "O Little Town of Bethlehem" and one of the lines in this Christmas Carol is: "the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight." This is a profound and most meaningful thought; it reminds us that God, in his love coming to dwell with humanity, dispels our fear and instead replaces it with love, and that love gives us something that makes our lives meaningful and wonderful: love gives us hope. What is our faith about, indeed what is Christmas if not a celebration of hope? Our lives in our modern world are fast paced, stressful, worrisome for many, often lived in fear... fear of our future, fear of those whom we should be able to trust, fear of losing our jobs, fear for our children and grandchildren, and sadly even fear of God. This little babe in Bethlehem didn't really make much of an impact on humanity until he started his ministry; but once he began to touch the lives of those around him in word and deed, the world was changed forever. As I sit at home in front of my Christmas tree, lights glowing and ornaments shining, I see more than just a tree. The tree - evergreen reminds me that Jesus' love is always there, keeping me secure in the knowledge that I am loved even in those times when all efforts don't seem to be enough for those I try to serve. The lights remind me of the light that came into the world and into my life when I accepted God's invitation to share my life with his. In my darkest moments - in health, daily life, or tough times it is that light that has got me through; reminding me that my happiness is not dependent on what I have, or if people respect me or not, but rather on my willingness to accept my life and myself as I am. I know that God loves me no strings attached. The ornaments, different coloured and shiny bright remind me of my friends, family and all who have touched my life; each one different but each one shining with their own special talents, their own way of expressing their love, and their own way of living out their faith. Yes, for me Christmas isn't just on December 25th. It is something that I celebrate in my own way, year round. The gift that was given over 2000 years ago wasn't meant to be wrapped and put under a tree only to be opened once a year, no; it is to be opened only once and once received it is the gift that keeps on giving through you and me. That gift is wrapped with love, filled with hope, decorated in forgiveness, and boxed in peace - and trust me; it can't be bought, there is nowhere on earth it can be manufactured - it comes from God and is given always only through you and me. MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A BLESSED NEW YEAR!