



AMERICAN NATIONAL CATHOLIC CHURCH

December 24, 2014

And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased." - Luke 2:14.

Merry Christmas!

I wanted to wish each and everyone of you a Merry Christmas, and let you know that I will remember you and your families at Midnight Mass.

I wanted to thank all of you for your courage to serve God's People as a priest or deacon in the American National Catholic Church. This past year has provided me with the reality of how difficult and joyous it is to be a Catholic Bishop outside of the comfort and restrictions of a developed institutional structure. Perhaps you have experienced some of the same experiences.

When I was a novice I was having some serious misgivings about my vocation. At Christmas, I was finding the adjustment to the self-emptying dimensions of Religious life very difficult. I had entered the Order filled with what I expected community life would be, and instead encountered my own and others brokenness. The only way through was to let go of my expectations and trust in God who had brought me to this particular moment in my life.

I shared these doubts with my spiritual director, and he shared with me his own doubts, and as a Christmas present gave me the following words written by Fr. Karl Rahner, SJ. Fr. Rahner's reflections brought me some measure of comfort, knowing that it is God who, as the ground of our being, fills all the empty spaces of my doubt, God who is with us and indeed God who, because of the Incarnation, has participated in all of the fears and anxieties, joys and wonder of my life. I was thinking that many of you, like me have left the comfort of our own expectations of what we thought our priesthood would be finding instead that God had other plans for us.

This Christmas and everyday Christ invites us to empty ourselves and be his hands and feet in the world. Let us all with, Mary our Mother and our model, say yes to God's invitation to lose ourselves in the mystery of loving service to Christ as witness to his all inclusive and extravagant love in the world.



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I pray that in this New Year, God will give you all you heart desires.

When you give up your frantic, violent inner anxiety about yourself and your life, your feeling should not be that you are in any way falling; when you doubt yourself, your wisdom, your strength, your capacity to make life and the happiness that comes from freedom for yourself, you should not despair. Rather, you should feel you are with Him, suddenly, as through a miracle that must happen every day anew and that can never become routine. You will suddenly realize that the petrifying face of despair is only God's rising in your soul, that the darkness of the world is nothing but the shadow less radiance of God, that what seems a dead end with no way out is only the immensity of God, God who needs no ways because He is already here.

I am there. I am with you. I am your life ... Do not be afraid to be happy. For ever since I wept, joy is the standard of living that is really more suitable than the anxiety and grief of those who think they have no hope...This reality, the incomparable wonder of my almighty love, I have sheltered safely in the cold stable of your world. I am there. I no longer go away from this world. Even if you do not see me, I am there. It is Christmas. Light the candles! They have more right to exist than all the darkness. It is Christmas. Christmas lasts forever.'

– Karl Rahner

Merry Christmas.

Yours In Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Most Rev. George R. Lucey, FCM".

Most Rev. George R. Lucey, FCM
Presiding Bishop