

## **THOUGHTS FOR CHRISTMAS EVE 2014**

Another year is nearly gone, as I have gotten older they seem to pass so swiftly! There have been new friends and farewells to old friends. There have been weddings, and babies, and memorial services. There have been times of peace and times of war. There have been shootings and deaths that shouldn't have happened and demonstrations about ongoing racism in our society that have boiled over but all too likely will go back to simmering before any real changes are made. There were wars and unrest around the world which may be officially over but haven't really solved the problems between nations, groups, and religions. And there are millions more people sharing the food, water, and air of our beautiful green-blue planet earth. And it is Christmas Eve and just a week remains of 2014.

On this Christmas Eve we need a savior as much as in any year, someone to save us from ourselves and find new answers to war and economic, political and religious differences, to lead us to a new unity. Even if a new star appears in the heavens, a new babe in the manger, only some will be satisfied while most of us will be disappointed again. 2015 is not looking like it will be a year of peace, nor that all the hungry will be fed, the job-seekers satisfied, nor those who mourn comforted. The forecast for 2015 looks to offer another year of too much of the same, a year of sorrows with some joy, a year of strife with some peace, a year of not enough with 1% having way more than they need. The year passing has been like too many that went before, the year coming most likely to join it.

So what different message can we take from this Christmas Eve? It may just be mythos and legend, but sometimes in the most difficult times there is something new that shakes things up, that offers just enough hope that people are inspired to write joyous carols, to sing and dance, and hope again for something better. And sometimes when a child is born, there is such joy and such hope that things actually change, and it is a miracle, and everything looks different. And even if things don't get better, we remember that they can be better, and our attitudes change.

Who knows what difference any baby can make? We are not prophets or sages, or fortune-tellers. We are just people who notice possibilities, who notice that something has shifted, something has changed just a little, and maybe enough. And sometimes those little changes in attitude, belief, understanding can open the door to real change.

The Candles we will light in a moment, remind us of the galaxies full of stars which fill the heavens. We all live here on one little blue-green 'm class' planet rotating around a yellow star we affectionately call Sun. Modern science is helping us see further and further out into the universe, but we are still a long way from being travelers in space. Not that we don't have problems aplenty to solve here on earth. Not that we have answers to matters of hunger and greed and competing beliefs. As we look up into the night sky, perhaps it will remind us that there are still unknown worlds yet to discover. There may be societies far more advanced than our own. There may be worlds which are truly at peace.

May the stories of Jesus and all the heroes of old remind us of the best that we can be! May we be challenged to discover new answers, new possibilities, new worlds when things have been too long the same. May the star announcing the birth of a savior burn every year as a reminder that all things are possible and may we read the stories and sing the carols of hope even when the words no longer fit our beliefs!

For this is Christmas Eve and Santa will soon be here, and there will be food and gifts aplenty. For in Bethlehem, a child is born, and he or she is greeted with love by shepherds and angels and all the animals, and there are still people of goodwill, and in this world there are blessings and joy and hope and peace. And on this night we put aside our differences and we sing together of all that is possible, and for at least this night the world is better and so are we. And so may it always be. Merry Christmas!