

## CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

Emmanuel - God with Us

In our Christian Faith tradition Incarnation is primarily associated with the birth of Jesus at Christmas. The Divine Mystery took on human form and lived in a small Jewish community with Mary, his mother and Joseph, her husband. Jesus embodies the Divine. Jesus while on earth as a human showed us a way to live and by his life, death and resurrection became our redeemer and savior and not only for Christians, but all humanity. This event is so significant that ecclesiastically we prepare ourselves through the season of Advent.

This interpretation of Incarnation is very human-centered and narrow. Is the feast of the Incarnation only significant for humans? As we shift our thinking and believing to accept that the revelation of God is considered to be in the whole of creation and its evolving processes we give space to an expanded understanding of Emmanuel – God with us. The Divine Creator is also embodied in all of creation. As our understanding shifts so too we must rethink our status and significance as earthlings. In his encyclical, *Laudate Si'* Pope Francis added his voice and called Catholics throughout the world to adopt a more proactive stance toward the precarious state of our planet. Pope Francis' call to an ecological sustainability is a radical call for a Catholic pope as he urges people to view nature as our common home.

Now, let us return to the birth of Jesus. The birth of Jesus is shrouded in mystery. Scripture tells us Mary was a virgin and, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. So the child will be holy and will be called Son of God." (Luke 1: 35). Through the power of the Spirit the Divine took on human flesh. This description brings to mind the description of the account of creation in Genesis, "... and God's spirit hovered over the water." And so, continues the story of creation bringing to life light, water, land, seed-bearing plants and so continues God's act of creating with each species being more complex and connected with all the other expressions of life before it until finally we arrive at the creation of human beings. Over billions of years all the creatures of the universe came into being.

Mary's yes cooperated with the Spirit of God – the Divine became human on the first Christmas Day. Mary and Joseph became collaborators in launching the New Reign of God which was Jesus' main mission throughout his whole life. May all of us be empowered by God-with-us to create peace, joy and love today and every day in the New Year.

Karen for the Leadership Circle