



From the desk of the CEO
Mario J. Paredes

Those Whose Lives We Cannot Ignore...

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There are men and women whose lives mark -- for the good of all -- the history of humanity. There are men and women whose lives set a standard for every person's life. Men and women who, through their words and in their deeds, leave a legacy of good, who improve the lives of everyone on Earth; among them are Gandhi, Francis of Assisi, Paul of Tarsus, Martin Luther King, Theresa of Calcutta, Nelson Mandela, Einstein, Da Vinci, Aristotle, Marie Curie, Diana of Wales, Einstein, Muhammad, Buddha, Gutenberg, Confucius, Qin Shi Huang, Tsai Lun. JESUS OF NAZARETH is counted among them.

In December, Christians around the world celebrate the CHRISTMAS feast, the Nativity or the Birth of Jesus of Nazareth. This celebration does not correspond with an exact historical and chronological date. Christians, for whom Jesus of Nazareth is acknowledged to be the Light of the World (Jn 8:12), sought to make the birth of Jesus of Nazareth coincide with the feast of the Sun God in the Roman Empire, which today corresponds with our Christmas holidays.

About 2,017 years ago, Jesus of Nazareth was born in Palestine, which was inhabited by the People of Israel of the Old Testament and a colony of the Roman Empire in the time of Emperor Augustus. Most certainly, Jesus was born in a small village called Bethlehem (Mt 2:1ff) in a manger, about two hours away on foot from the capital, Jerusalem. His parents were named Joseph and Mary. Jesus grew up in Nazareth as a person among his people, as a son, a carpenter, a neighbor.

When he was about 30 years old, Jesus took to the roads and immersed himself with the peoples of his land (Galilee, Judea ...) to preach (Mt 4:23) the Good News that all men and women are children of God, who



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is the Creator and FATHER in heaven, and who is good, compassionate, and merciful. He preached that we are all BROTHERS, CHILDREN of the same Father, called to live in LOVE, as the only form of relationship between people and as the only mandate for those who, henceforth, would be called his disciples. He preached a commandment of LOVE (Jn 13:34) among human beings that emanates from the recognition of God's LOVE for us that is concretized, especially in truth, in forgiveness and in the service of one another. He preached life in LOVE that makes us better human beings and that makes the experience of living and coexisting in society and in the world better and more livable.

He joined together with some friends, fishermen like him. People -- especially the simple, the impoverished, the marginalized, the known sinners -- followed him because they admired his "authority" (Lk 4:36), that is, the consistency in the way he lived and what he preached, between his words and his deeds, in contrast to the hypocrisy of others. Living in the love of God, whom he confidently called "Abba," or "Father" (Lk 11:2), he consoled, healed, and liberated. Those who approached him found in him "a force," that of the love of God himself, which gave them "life in abundance" (Jn 10:10).

Jesus lived his life doing good (Ac 10:38), as a man faithful to the Father and faithful to the human condition. He was a free man who, in defiance of the laws of his time, preached mercy and justice; who, facing the ostensible worship of God that neglects the human being (Lk 10:35), opted for love and the worship of God in his brother, especially in the most needy. He was a man free from ambition and greed, (Lk 12:15) free from fear (Mt 10:28) and public opinion, free from hatred and resentment, free from attachment to riches (Mt 6:24) and free from adulation (Lk 13:32) to the powerful.

Accordingly, he was killed by hanging from a cross (Jn 5:18). After his death, his first disciples, beginning with a transformative experience through which they proclaimed themselves new men and women living the same life that the Master himself had lived and preached, confessed



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the Risen and Living Jesus (Mt 28:6) in the midst of the Christian community and Christian life, of every Christian.

For Christians, the life of Jesus -- through love -- reveals the face of God, for "he who has seen him has seen the Father" (Jn 14:9). For 20 centuries, the Son of God has been confessed. Indeed, not a day passes in which names, events, or acts are unrelated to the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth. His impact is of such magnitude in the story of humanity that history is divided into years and centuries before and after Christ.

For all this, we Christians are preparing to celebrate, once again, the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, the one to whom we confess our "Way, Truth and Life" (Jn 14:6). This is a celebration that, despite an infinity of extraneous manifestations – decorations, lights, trees, cards, gifts -- must be lived, above all, within (Mt 6:6) every human being who recognizes God as Father, who recognizes himself as a child of God, who is capable of recognizing everyone as brothers, who seeks to live according to the plan that God has for every man and woman who comes into this world.

This is God's plan, a plan that Jesus of Nazareth designed and continues to design with his life and gospel: a new style of man and woman capable of living in the love of God given and provided to all in a life lived as a gift (Mt 10:39) and in service to others, especially those most in need of God's love in the world, so that it is always CHRISTMAS.