



Christmas Message, 2012

According to the Gospel of Matthew (2.11), the Magi brought three gifts to Christ: gold, myrrh, and frankincense. This past year, Christ's Mystical Body, the Church, has received three precious gifts: the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith; the canonization of Saint Kateri Tekakwitha; and the Year of Faith.

The Synod reminded us that to believe the Good News is to accept and rejoice in our dignity as sons and daughters of the Father in Christ. To evangelize is to announce the Lord's offer of salvation through both word and witness. It means opening the way to peace and forgiveness, charity and justice. Since Our Lord was anointed to bring "good news to the poor" (*Luke 4.18*), evangelization must embrace an appreciation and sharing of the beauty of life and the goods of this world.

Saint Kateri offers the Church in our country a special opportunity to deepen our awareness of the Indigenous People, to thank God for them, and to seek the grace of reconciliation. We are told that when Kateri died, God healed the physical ravages of smallpox on her face and restored her beauty. More importantly, God desires to heal the wounds of our hearts and spirits, and does so by the grace of his mercy. By thus reconciling us to himself, God leads us to a healing of all that separates us from one another and creation.

In his homily to open the Year of Faith, Pope Benedict XVI invited each of us during these coming months to rediscover "the joy of believing" and to share the hope that springs from faith. In response to humanity's thirst for God and the ultimate meaning of life, people of faith "point out the way to the Promised Land and keep hope alive," he said. "Living faith opens the heart to the grace of God which frees us from pessimism." By witnessing to new life in Christ and being transformed by God, we learn "the wisdom of the wayfarer" who "has learned the art of living and can share it" with others.

This Christmas, let us thankfully accept and generously share these three wonderful gifts: the golden treasure of evangelization; the perfumed myrrh of reconciliation; and the ascending frankincense of faith. May our prayers and trust in God envelope us in holy love and care for one another.

This is my prayer for you and your families this Christmas and throughout the coming year.

Yours sincerely in Our Lord,

+ **Richard W. Smith**
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