

CHRISTMAS-THE POWER OF ONE

Rev. Abraham Thomas

Christmas is the story of the One who was born in Bethlehem as a baby to a simple peasant girl and by His life and teachings transformed human history. All universal religions teach us of the transforming power of God as well as the potential power of every *one* individual, since each *one* is created in the image of God.

Which comes first - the individual or society-the one or the many-the egg or the chicken? The fact is that both are and can be understood as independent variables and realities. On the other hand, society and individuals are also dependent on each other and affect each other.



Christmas shopping is a good example of the strangle-hold that society (through business marketing) has on the individuals. For retail merchants and businesses more than one third of their annual business takes place during this season. US consumers spend more than \$250 billion to buy things as presents for others or themselves.

To me a perfect example of the power of marketing is the ability of the bottled water “manufacturers” to market 8 billion gallons of water and sell it for more than 11 billion dollars. All this, while most experts say that in the developed countries tap water is as good as or better than the bottled water.

(The eleven billion dollars could possibly



provide for clean water for the Developing World). Yes, we are “prisoners” of society, being “brainwashed” into voting for candidates who have the greatest visibility through TV etc. People are brainwashed into killing in the name of religion and politics-the horrible assassination of Benazir Bhutto being the most recent and sad example.

Anthropologist Colin Turnbull studied the Ik tribe in Uganda in the 1960’s. Their concept of goodness was “filling one’s own stomach” and looking after only one’s own interests-irrespective of family or any other connections. They were called the “loveless” people-“people who have become monstrous beyond belief” according to Margaret Mead the American Anthropologist. Ashley Montagu the scientist wrote that the Ik are “a people who are dying because they have abandoned their own humanity”



Charles Derber distinguished professor at Boston College cites the example of the Ik



culture to show how similar to this is what is going on in modern American and global society. His book, *The Wilding of America* illustrates the devastating effects of “greed is good-me first” philosophy, in the collapse of Enron, the debacle in New Orleans after Katrina, the sex scandals in the churches and even murdering family members for profit.. Meantime, the inequalities in the world are increasing, within and between countries, leading to continued presence of absolute poverty and resultant social instability and even contributing to terrorism.



However, the good news of Christmas is the message of the “Power of One”-as long as the “one” is powered by the Divine, powered by love and sacrifice. The promise of Christmas, the Christ Child is that a child dedicated by his/her parents to the service of God, can grow up to be the greatest leaders/servants of the world.

Every adult who “surrenders” himself or herself to the mission of loving and serving

others (as well as oneself!) can be agents of a peaceful revolution/change in the world, in each community. While we are aware of names like Gandhi, Mother Teresa and Martin Luther King, there are hundreds of thousands of “great people” who are



unknown and “invisible” who are making a difference in their own communities. The message of Christmas is that “God loves the world”, that humanity is precious to God. We have to believe in ourselves, because God believes in us. We should recognize our own unique role in the world. While there is plenty of “good news” in this world of people doing amazingly good things to and for each other, there is plenty more to be done! We have to discover our God-assigned role and do it! Respond affirmatively to the question: “If not now, when: if not me who?” Choose your goals for service for 2008 and go for it!



As a student of social sciences, I believe whole-heartedly that to change society, we have to change the social structures (especially, economic and political). However, no lasting changes in society can be achieved and sustained without the presence and involvement of dedicated individuals. A “purpose-driven” and “surrendered” life is as mighty as the split atom!

Our prayer and goal for the New Year for KANE should be to be part of this “civil society”-both religious and secular which believe and work for establishing justice and equity in the world, for bringing peace-turning “swords into ploughshares.” A self-sacrificing life is more powerful than the mightiest sword. As with St. Mary and the shepherds, it is the poor and powerless people that God often uses. However, the rich and mighty when they are truly enlightened and humble, like the Three Kings from the East are not excluded from God’s kingdom of love. To the humble who recognizes their dependence on God, is given the promise: “Peace on earth and goodwill to men.”



Let us pray with St. Francis of Assisi:

Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love.

Where there is injury, pardon.

Where there is doubt, faith.

Where there is despair, hope.

Where there is darkness, light.

Where there is sadness, joy.



May the power of **One** empower each **one** of us for greatness-to be “Mahatmas”!!

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR.