

# Christmas message from Don Marco Bove

*The angel came to her and said,  
“Hail, full of grace,  
the Lord is with you.”  
(Lk 1:28)*

**T**he Christmas message still has the power to surprise us. In the angel's words to the Virgin Mary, we find above all an invitation to joy, 'rejoice' much more than a simple greeting.

We always have many reasons to worry and be sad, to withdraw into ourselves and not see the signs of hope and flashes of beauty around us.

However, the angel invites Mary and all of us to joy, which is not a simple emotion, but a mission. That is why he reveals to her, and to us, the reasons for this joy, the secret of all authentic joy. What is this secret?

The angel reveals to her that she has been touched and filled with God's grace, that is, with his gratuitous love, with his tender gaze, which is why Mary is full of grace. God's love always precedes and surprises us.

The angel also reveals to her that because of this love, God himself gives himself in communion, 'the Lord is with you', which is why she will never be alone, but will always be able to count on his presence. The sign of this love and communion will be the child who will be born, Jesus, who will indeed be called 'Emmanuel', God with us.

For us too, knowing that we are loved and recognising God's presence at our side is a source of joy and great confidence. It takes away our feelings of loneliness and abandonment and gives us the certainty that our lives are precious in his eyes.

That is why joy becomes a task, because it must be shared. By offering our love and closeness to those who feel alone, we can make the joy of Christmas our own and pass it on to others.

This is the gift and mission of each one of us and of our Faith and Light communities, so that the joy offered to us may reach everyone and become a sign of closeness and communion for the most fragile and isolated.

May the joy of Christmas accompany us beyond these holidays and may God's closeness enable us to experience authentic communion.

Merry Christmas from the Lord.

Don Marco Bove  
International Chaplain of Faith and Light

