

REFLECTIONS

December 12, 2010,

Adapted from the Archives of December 17, 2006

**And suddenly there was with the angel a
multitude of the heavenly host praising
God and saying:
"Glory to God in the highest,
And on earth peace, goodwill toward
men!"**

Luke 2:13-14 NKJV

Christmas Memories

It was the Christmas season and I had invited the people in our small company to share some of the Christmas memories from their childhood. My expectation was to fill the room with memories of generous celebrations, bountiful gifts, plentiful food, and abounding love. But none of those things occupied the memories of Armando's childhood Christmases.

He had grown up in a poverty ridden area of Puerto Rico. There were no memories of joy—only of want and need. Armando had no gifts to remember or memories of food on their table. Even love was absent from his Christmas memories.

Then there were the Christmas memories of my friend Paul. He grew up in a large family with a meager income to support them all. But even though his family struggled for sufficient funds throughout the year, when Christmas came Paul's dad invited everyone he saw to join his family's Christmas celebration. "Many of them came!" Paul exclaimed. "We just never knew who was going to show up at our house for Christmas."

These stories remind us that our Christmas memories are very different. Few in the world are blessed with abundant Christmases as mine have been. And there are too few Christmases celebrated in unselfish love like Paul's family. Rather there are far too many Christmas memories like Armando's in the world—memories without love; only want and need.

But there is a Christmas memory we all share. It's one of a bright star illuminating the stillness, and voices from the heavens singing, "*Peace on earth good will toward men.*" It's one of Mary, Joseph, some shepherds, and a few men from a foreign land crowded around a stable bed. It's the memory of a baby dressed in swaddling clothes who would one day bring peace, joy and love into the world. And that is a Christmas memory that blesses every life today.

And it is a Christmas memory we should share with all the world.

"You are the light of the world."

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