

REFLECTIONS

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 was encouraging the people in our small company to share some of the Christmas joys they remembered from their childhood. I remembered my own joys with such fondness. I remember generous celebrations expressed in bountiful gifts and in abundant food, but most important, in abounding love. But that was not what Armando remembered about his Christmases as a child.

Armando grew up in Puerto Rico in one of its many poverty areas. His memories were not of joy but of need and of want. Armando had none of the joy to recall that I did; nor was there love. He had no desire to revisit the Christmas memories he had.

Then there were the Christmas memories that my friend Paul shared. He was from a very large family by today's standards, and it was clear to everyone that his family was of meager means. Though his family struggled all year just to get by, when Christmas came Paul's dad invited anyone and everyone he saw to attend the family Christmas celebration. "Many of them came," Paul said. "We just never knew who was going to show up at our house for Christmas."

These stories are reminders that our Christmas memories are all very different. Only a small percentage of people in the world enjoy Christmas as we do in our family. There are many people with no memories of the abounding love that we almost take for granted. And there may not be many Christmas celebrations expressed in the unselfish manner Paul's family did. Many more have Christmas memories like Armando has.

But there is a Christmas memory that we all can share. The Christmas memory is of Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the wise men. The memory is one of meager means, a crowded inn, and a stable bed. The memory is of a bright star illuminating the stillness, and voices from the heavens singing, "*Peace on earth good will toward men.*" It is the Christmas memory of God coming into the world as a child bringing peace, joy and love.

And that is the Christmas memory that I pray for everyone this year.

"You are the light of the world."

Richard +

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