December 13, 1972
Rolling Meadows, Illinois 60008

IN NOMINE JESU

II Corinthians 8: 9: FOR YOU KNOW THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THAT THOUGH HE WAS RICH, YET FOR YOUR SAKE HE BECAME POOR, SOT HAT BY HIS POVERTY YOU MIGHT BECOME RICH.

Perhaps you have SEEN or HEARD some of the Christmas gift ADS for the MAN or WOMAN who has EVERYTHING. Here are a FEW that I came across - - - as I shook my HEAD in SHOCKED DISBELIEF: a 14 carat TOOTH PICK for $21.00 - a GOLD CIGARETTE LIGHTER for $1,100 - - a DIAMOND STUDDED LADIES WATCH for $10,000 - an IVORY-INLAIDED and GOLD-PLATED GOLF PUTTER for $200.00 - an AMETHYST QUARTZ ASHTRAY for $250.00 - a SILVER-MESH PILL BOX for $450.00 - an IMPORTED CHESS SET for $5,000!

By contrast - as Christmas comes - on the OTHER SIDE of the SPECTRUM you have all seen PICTURES of MEN, WOMEN and CHILDREN with only a FEW RAGS partly covering their EMACIATED BODIES - - -- patiently waiting in LINE for their DAILY dole of RICE or POWDERED MILK.

Maybe it has occured to you that we live in a WORLD that seems to have gone COMPLETELY MAD in its VALUES - - that almost 2,000 Christmases have FAILED to GET ACROSS to MEN that the NAME of the GAME OF LIFE as GOD WANTS IT LIVED is SELF-GIVING IN LOVE.

That is the way GOD IS - and that is the way He WANTS US TO BE! And that means that you CANNOT PASS BY the POOR, or the NEEDY - - - that you CANNOT PASS BY things like the "NEEDIEST KIDS CHRISTMAS FUND." You CANNOT PASS BY the STARVING, and the DYING - - - especially NOT at CHRISTMAS.

So we have come here to this QUIET CHURCH this evening to SING, and SAY, and HEAR, and DO ALL THOSE THINGS that especially bring us as CLOSE to the HEART and MIND OF GOD as we can HOPE to be this side of ETERNITY. We want to try to SEE CLEARLY just what God, our Father, WANTS FOR US - His children in Christ to KNOW and DO.

Christmas is for GIVING! And whether you make 1 word or 2 out of the END of that SENTENCE - - it is still TRUE! Christmas is FORGIVING! CHRISTMAS is GOD FORGIVING MAN - FORGIVING US the MOUNTAIN of our sins and declaring us SINLESS because of the SINLESS SON of GOD - His Son, JESUS CHRIST. And Christmas is to be our FORGIVING our FELLOW MEN as He has FORGIVEN US.

At the same time, Christmas is also FOR GIVING - - - God GIVING 1st of all His Only begotten Son that "WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM MIGHT NOT PERISH BUT HAVE EVERLASTING

LIFE." Christmas is CHRIST GIVING HIMSELF into both LIFE and DEATH - so that we LOST SINNERS might have VICTORY in BOTH LIFE and DEATH. And Christmas is our GIVING OURSELVES in EAGER DEVOTION to a God who has REVEALED HIMSELF to US in CHRIST - as GRACIOUS and LOVING and MERCIFUL. And Christmas is we CHRISTIANS GIVING OURSELVES in LOVING CONCERN to ALL those whom God has LOVED - whoever and wherever they may be.

Christmas says that in the BABE of BETHLEHEM the GRACE and the LOVE of God was MADE INTO FLESH. God's Love became LOCALIZED in TIME and SPACE - manifest - EVIDENT - VISIBLE! Every one of you CHILDREN here tonight could have PICKED THIS GOD UP in your ARMS and cradled Him and SANG to Him. God - in His LOVE - in His GIVING - CAME IN SWADDLING CLOTHES and in the FORM of a NEWBORN BABY.

Is there anyone here that has FAILED to GET THE MESSAGE? Is there anyone here who has FAILED to UNDERSTAND that God LOVES THE WORLD - and has put HIMSELF into CHRIST to reconcile the WORLD unto HIMSELF?.....This is TRULY the UNSPEAKABLE - the INDESCRIBABLE GIFT! As someone has described it: "The ROBBED one makes the RECOMPENSE. The OFFENDED one seeks out the OFFENDERS. The HURT one INITIATES the HEALING." In other words, Christmas is the FEAST of the DIVINE GIFT EXCHANGE! We are to SEE and KNOW the GRACE

of GOD ~~and~~ and our LORD JESUS CHRIST - "THAT THOUGH HE WAS RICH, YET FOR OUR SAKES HE BECAME POOR, THAT WE THROUGH HIS POVERTY MIGHT BE RICH FOREVER."

God GAVE His GREAT, FORGIVING GIFT in the CHRIST CHILD for a PURPOSE - - - to bring SALVATION, REDEMPTION, RESTORATION, REAL LIFE! JESUS came to EARTH not on a SIGHT-SEEING TRIP - not for a CASUAL VISIT - not as a CURIOUS TOURIST - not on a PLEASURE JAUNT - - - - - but on a GRIM - SERIOUS - COSTLY MISSION! Christmas says that GOD HIMSELF is willing to GIVE - - to GIVE NOTHING LESS than HIS OWN SON for the DELIVERANCE of the WHOLE HUMAN RACE from EVERLASTING DAMNATION!

The Child whose BODY is LAID in the WOOD of a MANGER is DESTINED to have that SAME BODY BROKEN on a CROSS to make ALL MEN ONE WITH HIMSELF. Christmas is for GIVING - - the GIVING of ONE'S SELF - - 1st in DEVOTION and GRATITUDE to a GRACIOUS, FORGIVING GIVING GOD - - - and then for the SELF-GIVING of LOVE to meet ALL the NEEDS of MEN in DESPRATE NEED - - - and above all, to BRING THEM to the GRACE and KNOWLEDGE of God's LOVE in CHRIST our LORD.

You cannot come to the CHRISTTIDE any OTHER WAY. Obviously, the 1st CHRISTMAS is

GONE FOREVER. Mary, Joseph, the Inn Keeper, the Inn GUESTS, the TOWN as it was THAT NIGHT, the INN, the STABLE, the SHEPHERDS - - - - as they were KNOWN on earth at THAT TIME are GONE FOREVER!

But the HEART of CHRISTMAS - CHRIST HIMSELF - is STILL WITH US! And TONIGHT, as we receive the LORD'S SUPPER, Christ GIVES HIMSELF to us and FORGIVES ALL who receive Him in PENITANCE and FAITH. And He is EAGER to GIVE NEW LIFE and STRENGTH that will MOVE and INPOWER ALL OF US to FORGIVE one another in LOVE - and to GIVE OURSELVES in GREATER DEVOTION to HIS CAUSE - - - - the COMING IN of HIS KINGDOM.

Listen to our TEXT ONCE MORE: "FOR YOU KNOW THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THAT THOUGH HE WAS RICH, YET FOR YOUR SAKE HE BECAME POOR, SO THAT BY HIS POVERTY YOU MIGHT BECOME RICH." MERRY CHRISTMAS! Amen.