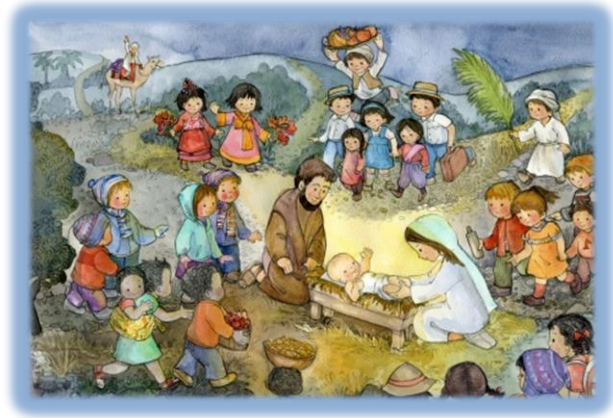


They have evicted Jesus

Christmas is almost here, and the streets are lined with shops displaying a wealth that is elegant but excessive.

On our left I see a number of store windows. Inside one of them it looks as if it's snowing, an optical illusion.



There are boys and girls on sleds drawn by deer and other little animals from a Disney-like world. There are more sleds and Santa Claus; there are also deer, little pigs, rabbits, frogs, red puppets and dwarfs. Everything moves gracefully.

Look there! There are the angels! But, no. They are fairies invented for the occasion to decorate the white landscape. An enchanted little boy gets on his toes to be able to see them better.

My heart is filled with a sense of disbelief, and then with a sort of rebellion.

This wealthy world has made Christmas and all that goes with it its own, and has moved Jesus out.

This world loves the poetry, the atmosphere, the friendships that Christmas brings—the gifts, the lights, the stars, the carols. This world counts on Christmas to bring in the greatest profit of the year. But it does not think of Jesus.

“He came unto his own, and his own received him not...”

“There was no room for him in the inn.” Not even at Christmas.

Last night I couldn't sleep. The thought of keeping Christmas while banishing the newborn Babe is something very painful.

If I were born again, I would do many things. If I had not founded the Focolare I would found a movement to help people celebrate Christmas. I would print the most beautiful Christmas cards in the world. I would make beautiful, artistic statues, large and small. I would record poems and songs from the past and present. I would illustrate books for the young and the old about this “mystery of love.” I would prepare scripts for plays and films. I would do all this and much, much more!

Today I am grateful to the Church for having preserved the sacred images. Twenty-five years ago I visited a country where atheism dominated. There I met a priest who used to carve statues of angels to remind people of heaven. Today I understand him much better. And the practical atheism invading the world everywhere today demands this.

At least in our homes may we proclaim loudly The One who is born, and prepare for him a celebration as never before.