

## *Christmas Newsletter*

As some of you know I have a deep love and respect for The Little Sisters of Jesus, contemplatives who live out humble lives of compassion, tolerance and peace mostly in communities that are marginalized and in poverty. What I admire most about their vision is that they do not preach, but become the presence of love wherever they find themselves. This is not a 'love' based on manipulative or ulterior motivations, but rather a love that opens out in intimacy, tolerance, giving and joy.

Three such sisters live in a circus travelling the length and breadth of middle America. One does the cooking, one does the sewing and the other takes care of the performers' children.

Here is a poem one of them has written this year which, I feel, rather beautifully expresses the season of Christmas.

*'You, God, are a God of giving and receiving*

*Eternally giving, eternally receiving,*

*It is your essence.*

*At Christmas, we humans open our arms to receive you,*

*A little newborn given,*

*soft flesh and bones for our hardened world,*

*tiny warm body for our cold hearts.*

*what can I in turn give to you?*

*my arms to hold you gently  
my legs to carry you softly  
my ears to hear you warmly  
my eyes to see you tenderly  
my mind to think with you wildly  
my heart to love you madly  
in each person and being I meet.'*

If like me you enjoy the Simpsons, you may well have seen an episode where Lisa converts to Buddhism and Reverend Lovejoy tries to dissuade her by saying that she can't celebrate Christmas because "*Santa doesn't leave presents under the Bodhi tree*". Richard Gere, the actor, would put things right by explaining that religions that are founded on Love and Compassion are all valid spiritual paths.

Of course there are aspects of Christmas which other faiths might have reservations about – rampant consumerism and so on, but these are the same excesses that are often denounced by Christians themselves who complain that in recent years the spiritual aspects of Christmas have been replaced by a credit card orgy. 'Peace on Earth – Goodwill to all' is the true gift of Christmas and a message as challenging and inspiring as it was two thousand years ago.

The Christ child has come to us to give us true peace that does not depend on external circumstances but springs out from our heart.

To all our Christian friends we wish you a blessed and joy filled season.

And to all our friends at Temenos may each of you take time out to celebrate the gift of being Lovers - of tolerance, compassion, goodwill and peace.

*Glory to God in the highest*

*And on earth peace to all men*

With love

Billy

### NEW YEAR'S EVE

Bring in the New Year by walking the Spiral at Temenos.

Each year from 11pm onwards visitors are invited to walk our candlelit spiral. Take time to sit in the Well and reflect on the past year. Is there anything that is outworn and no longer serves you? Is there stuff you need to let go of so that you can begin anew? You are invited to put pen to paper, and then walk to the centre of the Spiral where you are welcome to commit the past to the flames of transformation, and embrace new beginnings.

Congratulations to our Chef, Andre Wyngaard. EAT OUT magazine has named Tebaldi's as one of the best restaurants in the Breede River

Valley and in the Western Cape. Why not treat yourself to his festive menus?

See [www.temenos.org.za](http://www.temenos.org.za)