



Washington Street MISSION

*For God so loved the world
that he gave his one and only Son . . .*

John 3:16

Christmas 2006

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Dear Friends:

Have you ever imagined what it would have been like if you could have been present on that first Christmas morning? Have you ever mentally placed yourself in the stable, right in front of the manger, when Jesus was born? I have.

We can see that morning full of hope and possibility. But if we had actually been there, perhaps we would have been disappointed. After all, it was a stable. The brightness of that morning might have been dimmed by the reality of the dirt, the animals, the smells.

Sometimes we have a hard time seeing God in the middle of our dirty world.

I was reminded of this truth when I read some reflections on an experience of Francis of Assisi by theologian Timothy George in a recent article in *Christianity Today*. He wrote:

"One day when Francis was riding to Assisi, he saw a leper on the road. He reached out to embrace the leper and actually gave him the kiss of peace. While embracing this filthy, diseased outcast, Francis said, he was overcome by a dual sensation. One was nausea. The other was a sense of sweetness and well-being. Like Francis, we need both.

If all we experience is nausea, we will become cynics. We will give up on the world and turn away. But if all we have is sweetness, then our faith will amount to little more than sentimental fluff.

Genuine Christian faith, and true ministry, takes place on the thin line between nausea and sweetness."

Every day at Washington Street Mission we see God at work in the middle of our dirty, messed-up world. We experience both nausea and sweetness as we share the Gospel with people who have been broken and soiled and pushed to the edges of our society. In many ways they are outcasts as much as the leper Francis encountered.

This is a busy time of the year for us. More people are trying to get out of the weather by spending some time in our coffee hall. More families are coming for warm clothing for their families. More men are seeking admission to our transition house. More activities are being provided for the children in our afterschool and youth programs.

During this busy Christmas season, we need your help to make our ministry as effective as possible. Join us in bringing the good news of the message of Jesus to people in need.

Sincerely,

Kenneth E. Mitchell
Executive Director

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217-544-9011

MAY GOD RICHLY
BLESS YOU AND YOURS
THIS CHRISTMAS
SEASON!