

# CHRISTMAS GIVES "BIRTH TO GENEROSITY"

By Robot Thompson

Christmas time! And somewhere between isle seven and eight, the canned music, tinsel and Santa and all the consumerism that goes with this time of the year, it may be possible to discover the real reason, for the season...the Birth of Jesus. What a great gift to the world. It seems however, as each Christmas comes and goes the birth of Jesus is placed more towards the back of the shelf and a new Thomas the Tank, computer game or Buzz Lightyear is placed front and centre. The truth is new toys are being birthed each Christmas and I doubt we will ever put that Genie back in the bottle. But rather than being cynical and depressed about how Jesus's birthday is being railroaded by commercialism perhaps we can birth a Christmas campaign of our own as we promote how Christmas can give birth to Generosity.

My own parents felt the heat one Christmas oh so many years ago when my greatest wish for Christmas, was to have a toy robot. It was a camping Christmas at Tiona Reunion Grounds at Pacific Palms by the beach. I was about ten years old and my heart leapt as my wishes came true. Yes, I was unwrapping my gift and my eyes lit up nearly as brightly as the Death Robot's, as I inserted the two double D batteries into its back, flipped the switch and brought it to life. It was the best thing ever! It made a lot of menacing noises as it walked slowly forward, then it stopped and shot out sparks from an even more noisy gun that swivelled back and forth from its chest. Yes, this robot epitomised for me every good thing about Christmas ... except for the bit about "peace on earth and good will to all". And let's face it, not everyone is going to receive that part of the Christmas message.

In Mathew 26:10, Jesus refers to the poor saying, "you will always have the poor with you". All these years later it begs the question 'why do we bother even trying to help the poor?' Isn't it like holding back the tide? Issues of global warming, drought, bushfires, water shortages, rising sea levels, world economic uncertainty, being replaced by robots (some chickens come home to roost) and unemployment, push many people towards loss of home and income. Christ was certainly prophetic in his statement "the poor will always be with us".

And whilst it's true that two thousand years on, the poor are still with us, if we explore the scripture

in its entirety, we learn that Jesus was responding to the disciple's frustration towards a woman who was anointing his feet with some expensive oil. The disciples were upset because this valuable oil was being used, instead of being sold to raise money to share with those in need. It seems the disciples were shocked when Jesus defended the woman using the oil and further confused as he continued "the poor will always be with us, but I will not. She prepares my body for burial".

With hindsight we see the significance of this extremely generous out-pouring of love towards Jesus knowing as we do, that he was soon to be crucified. Generosity towards others underpins the narrative of the Christmas story: the offer of space for Joseph and Mary in the most difficult of circumstances; extravagant gifts from the three wise men; the ultimate gift from God in the form of Jesus. Our response is to do our part to promote peace and generosity. As Community of Christ we are charged to find ways to reach out to others with our time our talent and our treasure. Sharing with both friend and stranger, with no thought of reward, is how Christ lived and is the message of Christmas. Our mission prayer says "God, where will your spirit lead me today. May I be fully awake and ready to respond so that I may be a blessing to others". May this prayer be our "star" this Christmas, guiding us in ways to give birth to generosity in our world. It may seem to us that what we contribute may be a drop in the ocean, however our gifts may be a life rope to those who receive our generosity and message of joy, hope, love and peace.

And peace eventually came to our family that Christmas all those years ago... Alas, being so close to the beach meant that a few small grains of sand found their way into the gears of my beloved robot. The angry flashing lights dimmed, the Robot of Death halted his march forward, the guns fell silent. I think Mum and Dad felt those grains of sand were an answer to prayer. And for a moment, there was peace on earth and good will to all in our small community. That is, until the other gift was opened... "Monopoly". And 'Peace, Goodwill, Generosity, they went right out the window ... and Dad rebirthed the Robot.