



TEACHER OF TRUTH

"Sathya Bodhaka"



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Sri Sathya Sai Educare



God says...

“The followers of every religion, in their own way and style, call upon the One God who is Omnipresent. It is the same God who confers upon all mankind, health, prosperity, peace, and happiness. No religion has a separate God showering Grace upon those who profess to abide by that faith alone!

It is the destiny of man to journey from humanity to Divinity. In this pilgrimage, he is bound to encounter various obstacles and trials. To illumine the path and to help him overcome these troubles, sages, seers, realized souls, Divine personalities, and incarnations of God take birth in human form. They move among the afflicted and the seekers, who have lost their way or strayed into the desert, and lead them into confidence and courage.

Certain personalities are born and live their lives for this very purpose. They are called *kaaranajanmas* (born for a purpose), for they take on the *janma* (birth) for a *kaarana* (cause, purpose). Such guides, exemplars and leaders, appear among all peoples and in all lands. They inspire faith in higher ideals, and teach in the Voice of God, counseling from the heart.

Jesus was *kaaranajanma*, a Master born with a purpose—the mission of restoring love, charity, and compassion in the heart of man. He had no attachment to the self, nor paid any heed to joy or sorrow, loss or gain. He had a heart that responded to the call of anguish, and He went about the land preaching the lesson of love. His life was a libation for the upliftment of humanity.”

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba, *Divine Discourse on Dec. 25, 1978*

...Guru does

It is Christmas. What a great opportunity to talk about Jesus in our classes! Surely, many gurus have told Jesus's story countless times. Now, let's take a moment to look at the Why, What, and How:

1. WHY is it important for our children to learn Jesus' story (and Swami's, Muhammad's, etc.)? In the Valedictory Discourse of the 2007 World Youth Conference, Baba says, “Tell me your company, I shall tell you what you are. Hence, I advise you to join the company of noble souls.... If you can cultivate such positive and noble thoughts, everything will turn out to be good for you.”

When we share these stories of noble and great souls, they can ignite and foster noble qualities within all of us. We are reaffirming that we can do the same or showing them that life can be lived in this noble way.

Jesus was of the Jewish faith and He went to the synagogue to pray. Hanukkah is a celebration that fosters faith. This year, Hanukkah begins on the evening of Sunday, December 18 and ends on Monday, December 26. The candle had oil for only one night, yet miraculously stayed lit for all the eight nights. Another time, Jesus came to Jerusalem for the Jewish festival of Passover. Talk to the students about what that important occasion signifies.

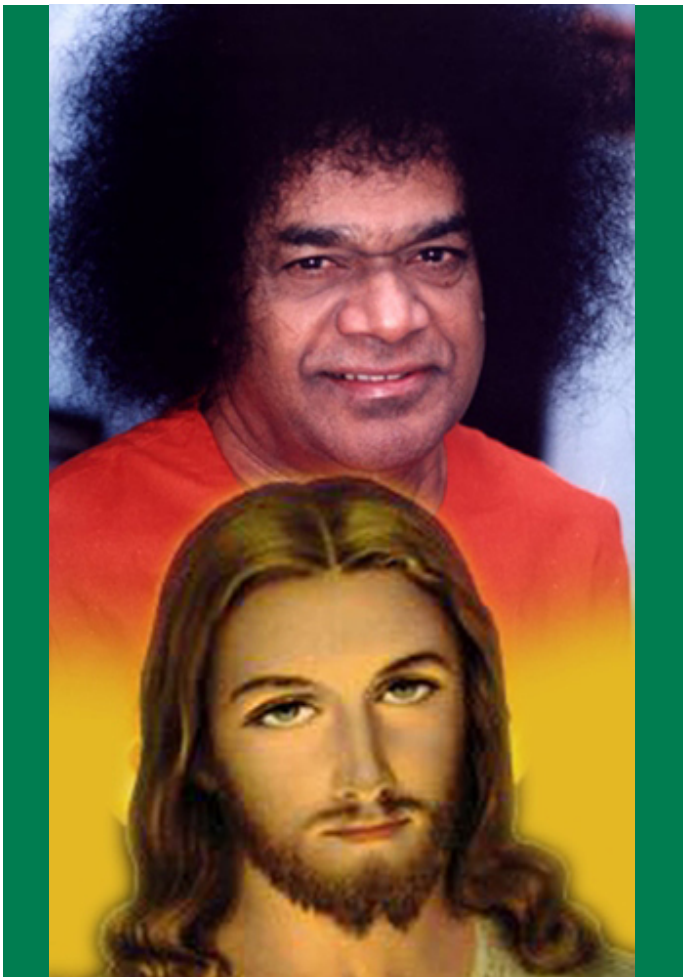
2. HOW can we be creative in sharing the story? How can we prevent the story from becoming a history lesson? Think about how we can make the story come alive for them. (It is not by mere reading or asking children to read each paragraph.) Share about Jesus's humanity, tell about His trials, His struggles, His teachings, and His noble qualities. Make Jesus relatable by telling how, despite many struggles, He was able to hold on to His love for everyone. Talk about how his disciples had faith in him, even Thomas who rationalized everything, like many of us.

Another idea is to make landmarks relevant. Show students where Jerusalem is on the map, or where Galilee and Nazareth are. The pages of a book will come alive for the students when these places and people are humanized.

3. WHAT part of the story do we share? Gurus should reflect on these ideas: If we decide to share the entire story, then the focus of the lesson could be to give a broad view of Jesus's life. It would be primarily informative. We could also choose to share one, small incident from the story and focus on a single subvalue (like compassion, forgiveness, etc.)

Another way is to focus on a specific perspective (especially in Groups 3 & 4). For example, think about the perspective of the Three Wise Men, who embarked on a long and arduous journey based purely on faith. Or the perspective of Peter and the fishermen—a complete stranger is telling you to fish in a certain location. What makes you trust him? Mary was 16 years old when the Angel Gabriel came and told her she will have the son of God. How much faith did she and Joseph have? What did it really take to say ‘yes’ by a young, unmarried girl in a traditional Jewish community to carry a child? It was an act of immense faith! We pray to her today. Providing these sorts of different facets to the story can make it not only interesting, but reinforce the concept from different angles.

So, as shown above, Swami tells us WHY we need to share these noble stories. As gurus, we need to know HOW to make them relatable to children, and decide WHAT material to deliver.





In this special issue of Teacher of Truth, we bring to you the story of Jesus as told by Swami. This supplement has been compiled from Divine Discourses and will be a helpful guide as you plan your lessons.

• TIP •

Teaching in PRACTICE

Discover unity by engaging in one's own community:

Ask friends and neighbors how they celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah, and what their special family traditions are. No two celebrations are alike! Do you celebrate Christmas or Hanukkah in your home? Share what you do too. Through communicating, learning, and understanding more about one another, we learn to see unity, not diversity.



MULTIFAITH CORNER:

Christmas songs links:

O Holy Night
O Come All Ye Faithful
Do You Hear What I Hear?
Hark the Herald Angels Sing
Mary, Did You Know?

Hanukkah songs links:

Borekh Ate (Blessed Are You)
Im Hashem Lo Yivneh Bayis
Haneiros Hallalu



The Story of Jesus - compiled from Swami's Divine Discourses



In many discourses, Swami shares 1-2 short stories of how Jesus lived His life.

From these stories, He brings out the essence of various subvalues such as compassion, faith, self-confidence, etc. By listening to Swami tell these stories, we learn not only how Jesus lived His life, but: 1. How we must strive to live noble and ideal lives too, and 2. How powerful a teaching tool storytelling is and how to tell a good story.

In 350 BC, Jews lived alongside Muslims and Christians. The people of that land were all Jews, and that land was also the birthplace of Islam & Christianity. Hebrew, the language of the Jews, is a very prominent language. It is like Sanskrit. Many of the ideals for all of humanity are contained in the Hebrew language. [\[Christmas, 1996 \(audio version\)\]](#)

Christianity is not just 2,000 years old. It was there even before Christ. Here, Divinity is explained very clearly. People praise God that He created the World in 6 days' time. On the first day, the brilliance of Light was created. On the second day, the wind and the clouds. On the third day, the sun, the moon, and the stars were created. On the fourth day, the earth and oceans were created. On the fifth day, fish and birds were created. On the sixth day, animals and humans were created. They are the main creatures in this world. God took rest on the seventh day. That day is called Sunday and is considered a good day to pray to God. Christians attend church on Sunday, the Sabbath day, and offer their prayers. [\[Christmas, 1996 \(audio version\)\]](#)

In those days, all believers of God entertained sacred thoughts of God. They had no other thoughts. They created forms and started worshipping these images. These deities were of their own imaginations and they worshipped them with their hearts and souls. There was a man named Ibrahim, and his descendant was Yosef, a carpenter. Also, in that village, there was a lady named Maria. Yosef (now known as Joseph) and Maria (now known as Mary) had absolute faith in God. They worshipped their family deity, Ibrahim, and contemplated on the secrets of Creation. [\[Christmas, 1996 \(audio version\)\]](#)

As time passed by, God willed that Yosef & Maria give birth to a child. [\[Christmas, 1996 \(audio version\)\]](#)

When Mary (Maria) was carrying the baby in her womb, she and Joseph (Yosef) were required to travel to Bethlehem to take part in a census ordered by the Roman Emperor. They had to travel all the way riding on a donkey. It was an arduous journey. When they finally reached Bethlehem, it

was night. There was no place for them to rest and they were tired. Joseph searched and searched for a resting place, but could not find any. Finally, he went to a cattle shed and knocked at the door. He explained to the innkeeper that Mary was about to give birth to a child. The innkeeper reluctantly gave them a place in a corner to spend the night. The same night, Mary gave birth to a baby boy. A makeshift bed was arranged for the newborn child with some old clothes and dry leaves. [\(Christmas, 2007\)](#)

The child was named 'Yesu.' What is the meaning? 'Ye' means One and 'Su' means that which is Sacred. Jews had full faith in this—God is One who is sacred. [\[Christmas, 1996 \(audio version\)\]](#)

When Jesus (Yesu) was born, three wise men followed a star to reach His place of birth. Seeing the newborn babe they bowed to the Divine Child in their hearts. Before leaving, each of them spoke about the Child as follows to the parents. One sage told Mary: "He loveth God." The second sage said: "God loveth Him." The third man said: "He is God." What is the inner significance of these three pronouncements about Jesus? The first statement that "He loveth God" contains the implication that Jesus is a messenger of God. A messenger can love his master, but the master may not so easily love his messenger. The second statement declares that "God loves Him (Jesus)." Why? Because He is the Son of God. The third statement "He is God" bears out what Jesus said, "I and my Father are One." It means that as the Son of God, He is entitled to acquire His Father's place. The unity of Father and Son was proclaimed by the third sage. [\(Christmas, 1984\)](#)

There are various theories about the birthdate of Jesus based on the 'bright star that appeared at His birth.' It is visible once in 800 years, it is said. Some say He was born on the fifteenth day of September. But, He was born at 3:15 a.m. on December 28, 1,980 years ago. It was Sunday. The star that appeared that day appears only once in 800 years. Its appearance had nothing to do with the birth of Jesus. There is no rule that when Divine Energy or Divine Incarnation descends on Earth,



a star has to appear. That is the opinion of devotees only. But, Jesus was Himself a 'Star' of infinite value—spreading brilliance of infinite dimension. Why posit another less brilliant glow? (*Christmas, 1979*)

From His childhood Mary taught Him good qualities such as truth, kindness, compassion, and justice. In His twelfth year, Jesus and His parents went to Jerusalem for a festival. In the crowds the parents lost trace of Jesus and searched for him everywhere. Not finding him anywhere, Mary sat under a tree and prayed to God to come to her help. At that moment, a thought flashed in her mind that Jesus was perhaps in a nearby temple. And Jesus was there, sitting in a corner of the temple, listening to the words of the priest! Mary affectionately rushed towards him and embraced him. "Child, what agony I went through on your account," she said. Jesus told her, "Mother! Why should you have any fear? Those who believe in the world will have fears. But why should anyone believing in God fear at all? I am in the company of My Father. Why do you fear? You taught Me that God is everything for us. How, then, can you worry like this?" Jesus had learned His lessons from His mother and developed His spiritual faith. After they returned from Jerusalem, Jesus felt that service to His parents was His foremost duty, because He owed everything to them. In this spirit, He used to assist His father in his carpentry work. (*Christmas, 1994*)

And so, He grew up in Nazareth. (*Christmas, 1988*)

The rabbi He had heard in the temple in Jerusalem had taught Him, "You alone are the Truth; remember this." Constantly contemplating this teaching, Jesus would wander alone for long periods of time. (*Christmas, 2007*)

Jesus announced Himself as the Messenger of God. He identified His body as having been given to him for alleviating human misery and serving the helpless and the homeless. He denied the demand of the flesh and devoted His skills and strength to relieve agony and pain. (*Christmas, 1982*)

He spent many years in austerities so that he could shower compassion and love on all of humanity. (*Christmas, 1979*)

Later, he asked himself, "Am I just a messenger, or am I more closely related to God, a part of God with the Divine as my essence?" Jesus spent twelve long years, wandering alone in deserts, engaged in this inquiry. (*Christmas, 1979*)

Then, as His consciousness rose, He became aware that He was the Son of God. (*Christmas, 1982*)

He strove hard to discover the distinction between Appearance and Reality, between Truth and Mental Image, and became aware of the higher level of consciousness which transcends the vagaries of the mind. From that peak of intelligence, He became aware that "I and My Father are one." And both are one single manifestation of the Divine Essence—the Holy Spirit. (*Christmas, 1982*)

When Jesus was thirty, Joseph passed away. (*Christmas, 1994*)

Mary told her son, "Now that your father has passed away,

you should continue your father's profession, so that we may earn our livelihood." But the boy was not inclined to continue in His father's profession. His mother also did not oppose the natural inclinations of young Jesus. (*Christmas, 2002*)

Then, Jesus sought His mother's permission to embark on His Divine mission. He was baptized by John, the Baptist and spent forty days in penance in a forest. During the penance, He prayed to God for three things:

1. That He should be blessed with the quality of loving everyone equally;
2. That He should have the strength and forbearance to suffer patiently any indignity or persecution that He might be subjected to by anyone;
3. That He should be enabled to use His God-given body wholly in the service of God. After forty days Jesus emerged from His penance with the faith that His prayers had been granted. (*Christmas, 1988*)



One day, young Jesus went to a lonely hilltop. His mother was very much worried, nay, depressed due to the absence of her son. Jesus was sitting and meditating on God all the while. After some time, He returned. As He was returning, he ran into a group of worried men on the coast of the sea of Galilee. (*Christmas, 2002*)

Jesus said to the first one He encountered, "What is your name?" (*Christmas, 2007*)

And Jesus named him 'Peter.' (*Christmas, 2002*)

Peter replied, "My name is Peter. He is my father" (pointing to an old man sitting nearby). The old man was making fishing nets. Jesus made friends with Peter. (*Christmas, 2007*)

When Jesus asked the men the cause of their worry, they said that they were fishermen, and that for quite some time now, they were not able to catch any fish in their nets. Jesus said, "Follow me. Are there any waters that do not have fish?" He took them along with Him in their boats to the middle of the sea and asked them to cast their nets in a particular spot. To their utter astonishment and great joy, the fishermen found that their nets were full with fish. This event created a lot of faith in the minds of the fishermen. (*Christmas, 2002*)

The men wondered, "How great Jesus is! He knows everything." From then on, they treated Jesus as their preceptor. Though He was young in age and form, He was old in wisdom. Hence, all of them were meticulously following His words. That entire community of fishermen treated Jesus as their Master, with great reverence. (*Christmas, 2007*)

The fishermen wanted Jesus to fulfill their worldly desires. Peter wanted more fish. But ultimately, he realized the futility of worldly desires. He wanted to go beyond the level of body and the mind as per Jesus' teachings. Jesus told them



to give up hatred and to love all and serve all. He exhorted them to develop faith in the principle of unity. Many disciples of Jesus interpreted His teachings in their own way. *(Christmas, 2001)*

Jesus told them that He had come to establish the reign of love on earth, and that they would be His helpers in His mission. He spoke to them about the preciousness of human birth and urged them to seek the Kingdom of God within themselves. To illustrate this, Jesus told them the following parable: In a river, water flows in a swift current. But even tiny fish are able to swim in it and move about merrily. In the same river, a huge elephant, caught in the rapids, is likely to get washed away or drowned, in spite of its enormous size. Whatever the speed of the current, the small fish are able to swim freely in the river and enjoy themselves. But an elephant is unable to survive in it. The reason is: What you need for survival in a river is not bulk but the ability to swim. Likewise man who is caught up in the ocean of worldly existence needs, not so much metaphysics, scholarship, or detachment, as the grace of Divine love. *(Christmas, 1988)*

Peter developed intense love and faith towards Jesus. The fisherman used to take Jesus out regularly on their fishing expeditions. And, after returning in the evening, Jesus would expound on spiritual matters to them. When Peter's father passed away, his mother was filled with sorrow, but Jesus consoled her by telling her, "Death is but a dress of life. Wherefore do you shed tears? Death is like changing one's dress. Therefore, stop grieving. These physical bodies come and go. Therefore, do not waste your thought on these ephemeral things. The indweller who lives inside this body is the true divinity." In this manner, Jesus preached and instilled confidence in the people around him. Thus, the fishermen community was spending its time happily in the company of Jesus. *(Christmas, 2002)*



And so, He began His ministry with a group of fishermen as His first disciples. He taught them that they should first seek the Kingdom of Heaven. To enter that Kingdom, they had to cultivate loving hearts. Then, their hearts would become the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus further declared to them, "I and My Father are One." *(Christmas, 1994)*

But even great Masters appear to be ordinary human beings in the beginning. As they gradually reveal themselves, people realize their true nature and flock round them in large numbers. Such was the case with Jesus. The fishermen became rich with the bounty of fish due to the help and guidance of Jesus. But, as they became rich, others grew jealous. They vied with one another in seeking His help and guidance. Some people even became jealous of Jesus' popularity and considered Him their enemy. They reported to the chief priest that Jesus had no miraculous powers and that He was deceiving people. Jesus was summoned and questioned, "How did you acquire these powers?" Jesus replied, "All this is Divine Will." *(Christmas, 2007)*

Mathew was one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. He was an income tax collector by profession and used to meet the fishermen to collect taxes. Jesus used to impart sacred teachings to the fishermen everyday. Mathew noted down all of Jesus' teachings and wrote the Holy Bible. Later, many others wrote the Bible based on their own feelings. Nowhere, had Jesus ever stated that He was God or the Master. He always addressed God as His Father. He had shown the path to experience unity. He never gave scope for multiplicity. He always said that all were divine. *(Christmas, 2001)*

Jesus was compassion come in human form. He spread the spirit of compassion and conferred solace on the distressed and the suffering. *(Christmas, 1981)*

In those days, people used to sacrifice pigeons in the temple of Jerusalem thinking that God would be pleased. Jesus sought to put an end to these cruel practices. He went to the place where pigeons were sold and let them all free. *(Christmas, 2001)*

He reprimanded the vendors and drove them out of the precincts. He drew upon Himself the anger of the priests. *(Christmas, 1981)*

At that time, the priests of the holy temples of Jerusalem had become corrupt and commercialized. They had deteriorated into proud and selfish men. Jesus condemned them and tried to root out the evil practices. For all forms were, in the eyes of Jesus, Divine Forms and He could not tolerate any action which belied this status. So, when asked by people who He was, He would reply, "I and my Father are One." Jesus tried to teach everyone the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man. Tradition-minded and egoistic men considered Jesus a false prophet and they tried by every means to thwart His mission. Jesus, however, did not waver. Faced with opposition, He continued to be an example of living Truth and continued to purify society. *(Christmas, 1979)*

Jesus had twelve disciples, most of whom had faith in Him and lived His teachings. *(Christmas, 1979)*

He would wash the feet of His disciples. When they asked Him why He was doing so, Jesus would answer, "I am washing your feet as your servant, so that you may learn to serve the world." *(Christmas, 1984)*

Jesus advised one of His foremost disciples Peter to live in love, for Love is God. Man can experience God only when he becomes the embodiment of Love, which doesn't seek anything or expect even gratitude in return. Love becomes sacrifice and service, spontaneously. When Peter listened to such exhortations from the Master, he found a new joy welling up within him and a new meaning in the word JOY. 'J' meant Jesus, and the letter directed Him to love Jesus first. 'O' meant others, who must be loved next. 'Y' meant yourself, who ought to be loved only last. *(Christmas, 1986)*

Jesus declared that there was nothing great about returning good for good. One should do good even to those who harm him. As Jesus went on with His preaching and drew multitudes towards Him, some of the priests and those in authority grew envious at His popularity. They started persecuting Him and charged Him with treason. Jesus, however, continued up to



the end to carry out His mission of Love and Righteousness—first, as the Messenger of God, and later, as the Son of God. *(Christmas, 1988)*

Jesus underwent several trials and tribulations during His time. He became the Savior and Messiah of the poor and forlorn. He helped them in many ways. Once, while He was crossing the desert, a poor woman approached Him begging for food. He gave her bread saying, “Take this.” When someone inquired where the bread came from, Jesus replied that it was Divine will. There is nothing greater than Divine Will. Everything is God’s will. The foremost duty of a human being is to realize the will of God and submit Himself to that Divine will. Those who develop faith in the will of God are protected, while others are not. Hence, faith is the basis for everything. *(Christmas, 2007)*

There was a man named Paul who hated Jesus. One day Jesus appeared in his dream and asked him lovingly, “Paul, what harm have I done to you? Why do you criticize Me? All your travails are consequences of your own actions. I am not responsible for your suffering.” Paul was transformed and attained sainthood. Thus, Jesus transformed many sinners into saints. *(Christmas, 1998)*

From the beginning, Jesus never said that He was God. He only said that God was His Father. He taught people that there was only one God and all were His children. His critics complained to the head priest against Jesus. The priest knew that Jesus was speaking the truth. But they did not support Jesus, to safeguard their own positions. *(Christmas, 2001)*

Vexed with the attitude and teachings of Jesus, a death sentence was passed against Him—He was to be crucified. The Governor, however, was a kind-hearted person and did not want Jesus to be awarded a death sentence. He lamented that Jesus was a great and noble man and was being crucified through no fault of His own. He told Jesus, “You are a great man. These stone-hearted people are trying to kill You without any reason.” Jesus replied, “I am happy that, at least, you have realized I am a good person.” *(Christmas, 2007)*

When it was ordered that all devotees of Jesus should be crucified along with Him, even His closest devotees—Peter, Matthew, and Paul—refused to identify themselves as His followers. Can these be called true devotees? One should be prepared to sacrifice everything for the sake of God. Under any circumstances, do not disobey the command of God. That is determination. Determination gives rise to sacrifice, which leads to immortality. *(Christmas, 1998)*

The disciple Judas yielded to greed. He betrayed his Master for a mere 30 coins. Judas could not find joy in life after this treachery. His mind gave him no peace and he had to seek refuge in suicide. *(Christmas, 1979)*

Thus, Jesus’ own disciples turned against Him—even those who adored Him and hung onto His words. They did evil to Him, who did them good. But, Jesus wished well for those who insulted and injured Him. This is a much-needed lesson even today. No one should count the harm inflicted on him and plan revenge. He must, on the other hand, return love for hatred and fraternity for enmity. To behave otherwise is a



sign of weakness, of want of courage, of lack of faith in human goodness. Jesus won in this holy struggle. *(Christmas, 1983)*

Finally, at the time of His crucifixion, His mother Mary came near Him and started shedding tears. Jesus consoled her saying, “Why do you cry, mother? The body is like a water bubble. Let them do whatever they wish with this body. You think these people are trying to kill Me. I have no death. None can kill Me.” Mary then told Him, “Are you not the son of this body?” Jesus replied, “Of course! I am related to you at the physical level, as a son. But, ‘I am I’ only. You are all like children to Me. You are all embodiments of Divinity.” *(Christmas, 2007)*

When He was being crucified, He heard an ethereal voice, “All are one my Dear Son, be alike to everyone.” When Mother Mary was shedding tears, Jesus told her, “Death is the dress of life.” Death is like changing the dress. Do you find anybody wearing the same dress every day? Just as you change your dress everyday, you change the body from birth to birth. The body has death, not the life principle. The Spirit is immortal and non-dual. To realize the non-dualistic nature of the Spirit is true wisdom,” said Jesus. *(Christmas, 2001)*

Thus, Jesus attained the highest level of spirituality, having gone through all tests. Jesus was not merely a human form. He was the Embodiment of Divine Self, verily. But, some people could not realize His Divinity. *(Christmas, 2007)*



When Jesus rose from the cross, He went on propagating the glory of Jesus. The Romans addressed Jesus as 'persona' meaning one of sacredness. The English word 'person' has been derived from this. It means that there is divinity in everyone. (*Christmas, 2001*)

The message of Jesus is the message of Love. Love is God. Live in Love. Start the day with Love. Spend the day with Love. End the day with Love. This is the way to God. Only the person who is filled with Love will be dear to the Lord. (*Christmas, 1996*)

The Birthday of Jesus must be celebrated by all mankind. For such lives who are born to carry out a mission belong to the whole human race. They should not be confined to a single country or community. Jesus found that scholars and ritualists had befogged the true religion, He engaged himself in teaching both spirituality and morality, for education is the very light of life. Jesus found that people were running after glass beads, imagining them to be diamonds and attaching great value to them. He went to the holy shrines and discovered they had become bazaars where Grace was being bargained and commercialized. He condemned the priesthood which tolerated and encouraged these practices. So, He drew upon himself the anger of the heads of temples and monasteries. They tempted one of His disciples with 30 silver pieces, to betray him into their hands. The Roman rulers were told that Jesus was attempting to assert himself as King and so could be punished for treason. Their insistence made the Governor order His crucifixion. When the nails were being driven into Him to fix him on the Cross, Jesus heard the Voice of the Father saying, "All life is one, My dear Son. Be alike to everyone," and He pleaded that those who were crucifying Him be pardoned for they knew not what they did. Jesus sacrificed Himself for the sake of mankind. (*Christmas, 1978*)

Carols and candles, readings from the *Bible* and acting out the incidents that surrounded His Birth, are not enough to celebrate the Birth of Jesus. Jesus said that the bread taken in the 'last supper' was His Flesh, and the wine, His Blood. He meant that all beings alive with flesh and blood are to be treated as He Himself, and that no distinction should be made of friend or foe, we or they. Everybody is His Body, sustained by the bread; every drop of blood flowing in the veins of every living being is His, animated by the activity that the wine imparted to it. That is to say, every man is Divine and has to be revered as such. (*Christmas, 1978*)

The traditional story of Hanukkah

In 166 B.C., Judah Macabee defeated the Syrians who had taken control of Jerusalem. He then called upon his followers to cleanse the Second Temple, rebuild its altar and light its menorah—the candelabrum whose seven branches represent knowledge and creation and are meant to be kept burning every night. However, the special oil found with it was enough for only one day. The process to make this holy oil took one week. It involved beating (not pressing) the olives, and then allowing them to sit, to naturally drain the oil.

But, then, a miracle occurred! Even though there was only one-day's worth of oil, the candles continued to burn for eight nights! This miracle inspired the Jewish sages to proclaim a yearly eight-day festival.

In modern times, the menorah has nine branches. On each of the eight nights, one candle is added to the menorah after sundown. The ninth candle, set at a higher height in the center, is called the *shamash* (helper). It is used to light the other candles. Jews typically recite blessings during this ritual and display the menorah prominently in a window as a reminder to others of the miracle that inspired the holiday. Also called the Festival of Lights or the Feast of Dedication, it speaks of God taking the little that we have and multiplying it.

Regardless what day of the week it falls on, Hanukkah simply calls for a celebration. It is a time to be with family, and remembering God's grace during a time of need. It is a time for joyous songs and prayers.

