

## Message on the Observance of Christmas, 1998

December 22, 1998

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Christmas.

Each year during this season of light and hope, of sharing and giving, we celebrate the birth of a Child. This Child came into the world with only a stable's roof to shelter Him; yet He grew to teach a lesson of love that continues to enrich our lives 2,000 years later.

That love is at the heart of Christmas. It is the love we give our children, who make our world radiant with joy and promise. It is the love of family and friends that inspires every gift and greeting we receive. It is the love that moves us to reject the prejudices that divide

us. It is the love that calls us to ease the suffering of those touched by poverty, illness, injustice, or oppression. Above all, it is the love of God for each of us, revealed in the timeless gift of His Son.

Wherever Americans gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus, let us give thanks for the precious gift of love that graces our lives and lights our way toward a better future.

Hillary joins me in sending our warmest wishes for a memorable Christmas and a new year bright with the hope of joy and peace.

BILL CLINTON

## Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa, 1998

December 22, 1998

Warm greetings to everyone observing Kwanzaa.

In millions of homes across America and around the world, the holiday of Kwanzaa is both a solemn and a joyous occasion. It is a time to honor God and to reaffirm a commitment to the values of love, community, and responsibility. It is a celebration of the diverse cultures within the African diaspora and a time to give thanks for the blessings of family and friendship. It is also an opportunity to reflect on the lessons and legacy of the past so that we might build a better future.

The seven principles of Kwanzaa—unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility,

cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith—echo many of the same ideals that inspired our country's founders and shaped our nation's character. Crossing lines of religion, culture, and background, these common values help us to forge stronger families and communities and compel us to achieve our highest goals.

As families across our nation gather to celebrate this festive holiday, Hillary and I extend warmest wishes for a joyous Kwanzaa and a new year of peace and happiness.

BILL CLINTON

## Christmas Greeting to the Nation

December 23, 1998

*The President.* On this joyous occasion, Hillary and I would like to wish all of you a very Merry Christmas. As we gather around our Christmas trees and dinner tables, let's take the time to give thanks for the blessings of the year just

passed, to rejoice in our children, to enjoy the company of family and friends.

As we approach the feast of light, I'd like also to send a special greeting to all the brave men and women in uniform who are serving our country in lands far from home. You're in

our hearts and our prayers. On behalf of all Americans, I thank you for the greatest gift of the season, for protecting our Nation and safeguarding the freedom we all hold dear.

*The First Lady.* Christmas reminds us that the values we share far outweigh whatever the differences there are between us. The twinkle of a child's eye, the joy of a grandmother's laughter, the love in the hearts of mothers and fathers for their children, all these blessings should be unwrapped on Christmas morning.

*The President.* May the spirit of the season be with you today and throughout the year. From our family to yours, Merry Christmas, Happy New Year, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The greeting was videotaped at approximately 11:30 a.m. on December 7 in the Diplomatic Reception Room for later broadcast. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 23.

## Remarks at a Housing and Urban Development Grant Announcement in Baltimore, Maryland December 23, 1998

Thank you very much. Thank you. Well, if Christa Spangler hasn't put us in the spirit of the season, I don't know who could. Didn't she do a magnificent job? [*Applause*] Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you, Secretary Cuomo, for your remarks and your remarkable work.

I want to say at this holiday season, the beginning of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, the season of Hanukkah for Jewish-Americans, and Christmas for those of us who are Christians, when we are told we should count our blessings, one of the things that has been a great blessing for me in the last 6 years as President has been my proximity to and involvement with the city of Baltimore and the State of Maryland.

I have—as you heard Mayor Schموke say, starting in 1992, I have visited the churches here; I have walked the streets here; I have seen the children here in their schools and their environmental projects and in other ways. I have loved this State. I have been to Annapolis and to Clinton, Maryland—[*laughter*]—and to Montgomery County—and Wayne—and to, obviously so many times, to Camp David and the environs there. And I feel very blessed.

But I was looking at your elected Representatives: Elijah Cummings, who is very well named; he sounds like a prophet about half the time; and I was thinking that there is no State in the country that has a pair of Senators with quite the combination of intelligence, compassion, and energy, and plain old pull that Mary-

land does. And I am so grateful for the work that Governor Glendening and Lieutenant Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend have done.

As all of you know, I've had also a special friendship with Mayor Schموke, and I sort of regret the fact that both of us will be retiring before you know it. [*Laughter*] But he did a remarkable job. He has done and he has some more remarkable things to do for this city, and I thank him for that.

I'd also like to thank the other State legislators, county officials, city council members who are here. I'd like to thank the AmeriCorps members who are here for the wonderful work they do and the residents of Pleasant View Gardens.

You know, there's been a lot of talk today about this project as an embodiment of the community America can become. There's been a lot of talk today about the spirit of one America, as Secretary Cuomo said. But I think it's important, if you'll forgive me just one religious reference at Christmas time, that we remember what Christa Spangler said: Anybody can become homeless. What does that mean? That means: There, but for the grace of God, go I. And it means that in our minds, we should be going there.

Most people, most Christians at the Christian season read the Christmas story in Matthew or Luke. But at the end—along toward the end of the Book of Matthew, there is a great sermon where Jesus says—and I won't go through the whole thing, but basically: “Even as you have