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Message on the Observance of Christmas, 2000
December 22, 2000

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Christmas.

At this joyous season each year, we savor our treasured Christmas traditions: a favorite ornament placed carefully on the tree, candles in the windows, a wreath on the door, family and friends gathered to exchange not only material gifts, but also the gifts of love and laughter. But amidst all these traditions, we remember that the true message of Christmas is in the Child whose birth we celebrate—the living proof of God's mercy and unending love. Christ's message of renewal and reconciliation is as fresh and powerful today as it was on that first Christmas two thousand years ago.

For Americans of many faiths, this is a season of renewal—of light shining through the darkness, of despair transformed to hope. This year, Christmas is celebrated during the same week as Jews celebrate Hanukkah and Muslims celebrate the Eid Al-Fitr—a powerful and moving reminder that followers of the three Abrahamic faiths share fundamental values: a reverence for our Creator, a belief in human dignity, and a conviction that we must love our neighbors as ourselves. By building on these shared values, we can create a future where all God's children live together in peace and understanding.

As Hillary, Chelsea, and I enjoy our last Christmas in the White House, we extend best wishes to all for a wonderful celebration and for peace and happiness in the years to come.

BILL CLINTON

Message on the Observance of Kwanzaa, 2000
December 22, 2000

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Kwanzaa.

One of the best ways we can shape the future is to preserve what we value of our past. The celebration of Kwanzaa is a wonderful example of this endeavor. With its focus on the values that have sustained African Americans through the centuries—unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith—Kwanzaa also emphasizes the importance of strong families and communities to our success as a nation in the years to come.

African Americans have a proud history and a rich heritage. During this holiday season, as Americans of many different back-grounds remember and rejoice in their cultural and religious traditions, let us all give thanks for the diversity that is among America's greatest strengths, and let us unite around the shared dreams and values that bind us together as one nation.

Hillary joins me in sending best wishes to all for a memorable Kwanzaa and for peace and happiness in the years to come.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

The President's Radio Address
December 23, 2000

Good morning. This weekend we not only celebrate the first Christmas of the new millennium; we also celebrate an America blessed with the gift of unprecedented prosperity and progress.

We're in the midst of the longest economic expansion in our Nation's history, with record surpluses, more than 22 million new jobs, the lowest unemployment in history, and the lowest Hispanic- and African-American unemployment ever recorded.

We have strengthened the cornerstone of the American dream along the way: the chance to own a home. Today, we have the highest homeownership in our Nation's history with record levels of minority homeownership. And more Americans than ever are celebrating that gift this holiday season.

Over the last 8 years, Vice President Gore and I have worked hard to give nearly 10 million more families the opportunity to own their own homes by cutting redtape, speeding up loans, making financing available for families who were too often locked out of the market, creating more opportunity and choice for families who live in assisted housing.

In the last 3 years, our administration has secured nearly 200,000 new housing vouchers to help hard-pressed families find decent and affordable housing. I want to especially thank our HUD Secretary, Andrew Cuomo, for his extraordinary commitment to making affordable housing accessible to citizens who need it most.

Today we're introducing new measures to more fully integrate public housing, so families from different social and economic walks of life have the chance to live in diverse communities. In addition to expanding opportunity for more Americans, this will also help to break down destructive barriers of race and class.

We're also taking action to increase loan limits from the Federal Housing Administration by nearly 9 percent to help more working families to own their first home. Since 1993, the FHA program has given more than 4 million Americans that chance. We have made real progress.

But too many Americans still will be spending this Christmas without a roof over their heads. That's why we've helped to move thousands of families off the street. Yet, there still are more than a half million men, women, and children whose only home every night is a neighborhood shelter or a park bench.

In this time of unparalleled prosperity, we must do more to help them. Today I'm pleased to announce $1 billion in new grants to help more than 200,000 homeless people along the path to self-sufficiency. This is the largest amount ever dedicated to helping homeless Americans rebuild their lives.

The grants will fund proven successful programs like Continuum of Care, which helps homeless families with transitional and permanent housing, drug treatment and medication, job training, and child care. It also funds efforts like the Emergency Shelter Grants program, which provides for transitional housing and helps communities maintain emergency shelters.

Taken together, these grants are a gift that will give back to us in many ways. They will empower communities to employ innovative solutions to helping homeless adults and their children, people like Juanita Price, a recovering drug addict who once spent her nights in abandoned buildings and hollowed-out cars. Thanks to the Continuum of Care program, Juanita found the support she needed and turned her life around. Today, she's got a steady job, an apartment, and she's studying to be a nurse at Howard University here in Washington, DC.

There are lots and lots of people like Juanita who could use a helping hand. Today we're lending that hand by giving more homeless Americans the tools they need to succeed, so that this Christmas they can find warmth inside a home, not from the top of a steam grate.

It is said in the Scripture: "I will appoint a place for my people so they may dwell in a place of their own and move no more." Today, in this season of hope and giving, we should redouble our efforts to ensure that every American can have a place of his or her own.

The steps we're taking now will create new opportunity for the homeless, for hard-pressed working families, and for those struggling to buy their first home. I can't think of any better way to celebrate this holiday season.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 4:40 p.m. on December 22 in the Oval Office at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on December 23. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 22 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.