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that doorway that was built about 1500 years ago in that old church. And we went down into the crypt, where I'm sure some of you have been, where they believe the manger was where Jesus was born. And we were left there for a time, the three of us, by ourselves—something that almost never happens to us—to reflect on the meaning of that.

I say again, I came out of that, first of all, profoundly grateful for the opportunity to serve, for the many gifts in my life and my family's life but also determined again to remember what I think the fundamental lesson is—which is not that charity is the greatest virtue but that charity is an obligation because of our common humanity, because we are not better than those who, because of their circumstances, happen to need a hand up at any given moment in time.

So, as much as any place in our country, the State of Maryland and the city of Baltimore embodies that. You should be very proud and very grateful for what you have done and what you are. And it should make you more determined for what you can become.

I was sitting there looking at Christa Spangler, listening to her. She got a second chance—maybe a third or a fourth or a fifth chance. But here she is—sounding good, looking good, got a life, got a job, got a house, got a husband. Stand up; stand up here. [*Applause*] Thank you; thank you. This ought to be a country of neighbors, a country of equals, a country of people committed to a hand up.

God bless you, and happy holidays. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:07 p.m. in the gym at the Boys and Girls Club. In his remarks, he referred to Christa Spangler, former recipient of homeless assistance services, who introduced the President; Prince Georges County Executive Wayne Curry; Mayor Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore; and Gov. Parris Glendening of Maryland.

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, and the transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on December 23.

Statement on United Nations Efforts Toward a Political Settlement in Cyprus

December 23, 1998

The United States remains deeply committed to finding a viable solution to the Cyprus problem. A political settlement that would put an end to the tragic division of Cyprus has been, and continues to be, a high priority of my administration.

The United States strongly supports U.N. Secretary-General Annan's September 30, 1998, initiative to reduce tensions and promote progress toward a just and lasting settlement on Cyprus. The Security Council has adopted UNSCR 1218 endorsing Secretary-General Annan's initiative and requesting him to intensify his efforts to achieve specific