

**The original documents are located in Box 42, “12/16/76 - Remarks at the Pageant of Peace Prior to Lighting the National Christmas Tree” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.**

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN . . . .

REMARKS AT CHRISTMAS PAGEANT OF PEACE

AND LIGHTING THE NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 16, 1976

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PAGEANT OF PEACE

THANK YOU, MR. DIXON

MR. AMBASSADOR

(SEVILLA-SACASA)

SECRETARY KLEPPE

MAYOR WASHINGTON

DIRECTOR EVERHARDT

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN

AS OUR BICENTENNIAL YEAR DRAWS TO A CLOSE,  
IT IS ESPECIALLY APPROPRIATE TO GATHER ONCE MORE AROUND THIS  
TRADITIONAL SYMBOL OF FAMILY TIES AND FRIENDLY REUNIONS --  
OUR NATION'S CHRISTMAS TREE. IN DOING SO, WE COMBINE  
OUR YEAR-LONG CELEBRATION OF HISTORICAL EVENTS WITH A PERSONAL  
REDEDICATION TO TIMELESS VALUES.

THE MESSAGE OF CHRISTMAS HAS NOT CHANGED OVER THE  
COURSE OF 20 CENTURIES: PEACE ON EARTH, GOOD WILL TOWARDS  
MEN. THAT MESSAGE IS AS INSPIRING TODAY AS IT WAS WHEN  
IT WAS FIRST PROCLAIMED TO THE SHEPHERDS NEAR BETHLEHEM.  
IN 1976, AMERICA HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH PEACE AND  
A SIGNIFICANT RESTORATION OF DOMESTIC HARMONY.

BUT TRUE PEACE IS MORE THAN THE ABSENCE OF BATTLE.●  
IT IS ALSO THE ABSENCE OF PREJUDICE AND THE TRIUMPH OF  
UNDERSTANDING.● BROTHERHOOD AMONG ALL PEOPLES MUST BE THE  
SOLID CORNERSTONE OF A LASTING PEACE.● IT HAS BEEN  
A SUSTAINING FORCE FOR OUR NATION AND REMAINS A GUIDING STAR  
FOR OUR FUTURE.●

THE CELEBRATION OF THE BIRTH OF JESUS IS OBSERVED ON  
EVERY CONTINENT.● THE CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS ARE NOT ALWAYS  
THE SAME.● BUT THE FEELINGS THAT ARE GENERATED BETWEEN  
FRIENDS AND FAMILY MEMBERS ARE EQUALLY STRONG AND WARM.●

IN A FEW MOMENTS, I WILL TURN THE SWITCH THAT LIGHTS UP  
OUR NATIONAL CHRISTMAS TREE. AS BEAUTIFUL AS THAT TREE IS,  
IT WILL BE ONLY A SYMBOL IF ITS LIGHT IS NOT MATCHED BY THE  
GLOW OF LOVE IN OUR HEARTS.

IT IS MY PERSONAL PRAYER ON THIS CHRISTMAS OF 1976,  
THAT THE TREE WHICH I LIGHT TONIGHT IS ONLY THE BEGINNING --  
THAT EACH OF YOU WILL ALSO LIGHT A FLAME OF LOVE --  
LOVE THAT IS REFLECTED IN THE EYES OF ALL OUR BROTHERS AND  
SISTERS ACROSS THE NATION AND AROUND THE WORLD.

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NOW, BETTY JOINS ME IN WISHING YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS

AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR●

THANK YOU, AND GOD BLESS YOU●

END OF TEXT