

HONG KONG
Christmas 1985

You will, I know, be receiving these greetings of mine some little time after Christmas Day instead of before. Please forgive my lateness this year, and be assured that you have nonetheless been remembered with particular affection in my thoughts and prayers during this Christmas season. As it should however still be within the traditional 12 Days of Christmas that this message arrives to you, my New Year wishes and blessings may be more timely; and, besides, maybe we ought to give more attention and prominence to those traditional 12 Days and to the festival of Epiphany (that, after all, in some places IS Christmas), rather than merely to the "some-many-shopping-days-till-Christmas" or to the "last-posting-dates" before Christmas.

I hope you'll also excuse this "round-robin" message --- it's a form of correspondence I don't much care for myself, normally, and I'd much prefer to write to you individually to tell my tale of recent events that have prevented me writing till now. But I thought it better to say something briefly to everyone first, and maybe later on say more --- I'd take ages to write personally to everybody, and you know how irregular I am as a correspondent anyway.....

You see, I've just come home from a 4-week stint in hospital, and am still unable to focus my eyes properly, so that both reading and writing are difficult and tiring. It's a quite ridiculous malady I've got, really: the only cure is simply to rest, do nothing and be patient. At the beginning, though, it seemed rather dramatic and alarming --- one morning I found I couldn't stand or walk steadily and I was seeing double: a few days later I'd lost coordination and balance altogether, and my eyes had become fixed. They did X-rays and other tests but still didn't know what was wrong with me until the neurologist appeared and finally satisfied himself (to my great relief too at that point!) that what I'd got was a rare nerve disorder known as the Miller-Fischer syndrome. My symptoms were text-book classic, so I became something of a 'case' for interns and final-year medical students (I was in the university's teaching hospital). Happily no further nerve controls went out of order, and gradually the condition began to heal itself. I had to learn how to walk, and am still a little unsteady. Eye-movement and focussing is returning too but much more slowly --- they don't know how long full recovery may take, as it varies from case to case.....

One thing about being in hospital is the sense you get of peoples care and concern for you, the appreciation and love of friends and colleagues: and friends become more dear and appreciated too, maybe especially those far away who don't know about your illness. I feel more grateful to the good Lord than I can ever express for the marvellous friends and dear ones He's given me --- and I pray for you all with particular warmth and gratitude this Christmastime, that the Lord may bless you with His peace and every good gift and joy.

Again this year, in the lovely prayers and other texts of the Church's liturgy for the last 10 days or so of Advent, I've been thinking specially of all of you: may your hearts be filled with wonder and praise at Christ's coming this Christmastime and in 1986

Love and Blessings,

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

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Love and Blessings,

Cavan

