

## CHRISTMAS EVE CELEBRATIONS AND THE CHRISTMAS-NEW YEAR RETREAT AT THE HEADQUARTERS ASHRAM

*May Jesus become a living factor in our lives. Then, indeed, Christmas will become a turning point into a new life of light and wisdom.*

**Worshipful Sri Swami**

**Chidanandaji Maharaj**

As in yesteryears, Holy Christmas was celebrated with great devotion and spiritual rejoicing at the Headquarters Ashram on 24th December 2014. The Ashramites, devotees and guests participated enthusiastically in the joyous function which began with Jaya Ganesh Kirtan at 7.30 p.m. in the Swami Sivananda Auditorium Satsang Hall. The nativity scene, illustrating the birth of the new child, was installed in a temple in the centre of the Satsang Hall and a beautifully decorated Christmas tree was also placed.



The nativity scene, illustrating the birth of the new child, was installed in a temple in the centre of the Satsang Hall and a beautifully decorated Christmas tree was also placed.

The evening featured melodious devotional songs in English, Swedish, Malayalam, Latin and Hindi. A wonderful pantomime clown act by two devotees had the audience in joyful laughter. It was followed by a beautiful performance of Indian classical dance offered as worship to Lord Ganesh. Thereafter, the traditional Bible readings interspersed with sacred music began. "Silent Night" was sung beautifully after the first Bible verse from the prologue to the Gospel of John, "In the beginning was the word." After Joseph's dream, the rosary of Hail Mary was devoutly chanted in five languages with Ave Marie sung softly in the background. The celebration concluded at 10.30 p.m. with silent meditation followed by closing prayers and distribution of sacred Prasad.

The 19th Annual Christmas-New Year Retreat for devotees from abroad was held at the Headquarters Ashram from 25th December 2014 to 1st January 2015. Forty-five devotees from twenty countries and a number of guests attended the inspiring sessions. Mid-morning talks were given by senior Swamijis of the Ashram in the Swami Sivananda Auditorium Satsang Hall. The speakers shared their wisdom and insight on this year's theme: "True Spirituality is a Call to Absolute Freedom." The participants enthusiastically attended the daily guided meditation led by senior Swamijis every evening. Morning meditation and evening Satsang in the sacred Samadhi Hall were also included in the very successful programme.

May the benedictions of Lord Jesus and Sadgurudev Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj be upon all!

□ □ □

