



Thoughts From The General Manager/CEO
By Daniel G. Laws

A Holiday Message.

"In our fast-paced world, take time to remember the true meaning of Christmas".

With Thanksgiving a fond memory and Christmas just around the bend, it is a good time to take stock of all that we have. If you are like me, you have probably lived this past year at breakneck speed. As you reflect on significant events of 2001, they may appear more like fence posts on the side of the highway-disappearing as quickly as they appear, rather than cherished memories that conjure up images that bring a warm glow or smile.

If I have described how you feel, then join me in one large collective effort to slow it all down. Let's take time to enjoy each moment of the holiday season. Make an effort to bring cheer to someone else's life. Reflect on those things that evidence God's blessing and be thankful. The commercialism associated with Christmas can rob us of its real meaning. It will enslave us with required shopping and bind us with guilt over all we did not buy.

This Christmas don't let commercial hype drown out the birth of Christ and don't let guilt replace joy. He came into this world in an unassuming way. He comes into our hearts in the same way. He came to bring peace, not shopping frenzies and joy, not harried trips to the supermarket or mall. Most of all, He came to restore each to our rightful place as children of a King. The message of peace has greater importance to us today than ever before. The terrorist attack of September 11, and all that has followed, serves to heighten our awareness and puts our senses on alert. In fact, you may find it hard to find the peace today that He came to bring. But His peace transcends the immediate and is not restricted by how we feel. Longfellow's famous poem, penned more than one hundred years ago, points out that these feelings are not new and neither is Longfellow's conclusion:

And in despair I bowed my head there is no peace on earth I said, For hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on earth good will to men.

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep, God is not dead nor doth he sleep.

The wrong shall fail the right prevail with peace on earth good will to men.

As for me, I will look back over my shoulder and consider my steps. As I visit each one, I will find something very familiar there-His gentle guidance and His care. I will recommit to the things I seem to loose sight of and endeavor to do them better. I will be thankful for the 27 years I have had with my wife and look forward to many more. And I will be thankful for my three sons-it's still hard to believe that I get to be their dad.

From all of us here at Rio Grande, may your holiday season be filled with peace that passes understanding and immeasurable joy. Have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.