

VIDEO MESSAGE OF HIS EMINENCE CARDINAL CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
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My Dear Friends in Christ,

As the personal representative of the Holy Father to the United States, I bring you greetings in the name of Pope Francis and the assurance of his spiritual closeness during this holy season.

In his Christmas homily last year, the Pope said:

“The manger of Bethlehem speaks to us not only of closeness but also of *poverty*. Around the manger there is very little: hay and straw, a few animals, little else. People were warm in the inn, but not here in the coldness of a stable. Yet that is where Jesus was born.”¹

The story of Christmas is the story of a Messiah who is poor and who enters among the poor. This “style” of God – being poor among the poor – helps us to answer the question: *Where is Christ today, in our present world?* We will find the Lord, waiting to encounter us, in the same kind of place where the shepherds and the magi found him. They found him where there was nothing: no room in the inn, with a man and his wife who had been forced to leave their home and were refused a welcome in the place where they arrived.

Where, then, is Christ today? Yes, he is with individuals and families who have been forced to leave their homes by impossible conditions, and who have no guarantee of where they will end up or whether they will be welcomed there. He is with people whose poverty the rich and the powerful seem unable or unwilling to alleviate.

Where is Christ today? He is in every place where there seems to be a lack of hope. He is with the victims of the war in Ukraine. He is with the innocent who

suffer the effects of hatred and fear in Israel and Palestine. He is with countless others who experience the absurdity of war in places too numerous to list.

Where is Christ today? He is with those who endure trauma because of abuses to their dignity. He is with those who are left alone and forgotten.

Pope Francis said:

“The manger reminds us that [Jesus] was surrounded by nothing but love: Mary, Joseph and the shepherds; all poor people, united by affection and amazement, not by wealth and great expectations. The poverty of the manger thus shows us where the true riches in life are to be found: not in money and power, but in relationships and persons. And the first person, the greatest wealth, is Jesus himself. Yet do we want to stand at his side? Do we draw close to him? Do we love his poverty? Or do we prefer to remain comfortably ensconced in our own interests and concerns? Above all, do we visit him where he is to be found, namely in the poor mangers of our world? For that is where he is present.”²

Let us be in communion with the Holy Father who constantly reminds us not to forget the poor. For it is there, in the poor, that we will meet Christ who is waiting to encounter us. And when we encounter Jesus where he is – in our own poverty and in the poverty of others – the same thing happens as happened at the first Christmas: the presence of Jesus turns rejection into welcome, despair into hope, and sadness into joy.

Dear friends: I pray that you will have a renewed encounter with Christ during this Christmas season, and that because of this, you and your families will find new hope and joy. Merry Christmas!

¹ Pope Francis, Homily for the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, December 24, 2022.

² *Ibid.*