

**EWTN CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2016**  
**ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE – APOSTOLIC NUNCIO**

Dear Friends,

May the Peace of the Infant King be with you all!

It is my great joy to greet you during this Christmas season, as I celebrate my first Christmas here in the United States of America as Apostolic Nuncio. I extend to all of you and your loved ones the heartfelt good wishes of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, who holds each of you in his loving embrace.

In these blessed days, we have before us the image of a little Child born of the Virgin Mary. He is Emmanuel, 'God with us.' We need not be afraid, because he comes with a message of comfort, reminding us that we are all part of his family, that we all have a purpose and a meaning, that before him we are all significant. He never wants us to feel that we are alone. We are surrounded and supported by the whole Church in prayer. No matter how different the circumstance of our lives may be, we are united with each other by a special bond of grace, by the outpouring of his generous love into our hearts.

No one can deny that the world is faced with many problems, especially with continual threats to our peace and to our security, while countless numbers of displaced people around the globe are searching for a place to belong. Like the Holy Family looking for shelter and a place to rest their heads, let us welcome them, for we and our ancestors were all, at one time or another, strangers in a foreign land.

Even at times, if we should be tempted to feel overcome by the burdens of life, the Church encourages us to lift up our hearts and to listen attentively to the message of the angels on that first Christmas night, the message that was given to the shepherds in the field of Bethlehem: "Behold, I bring you good news of great joy for all the people. Today is born for you a Savior who is Christ, the Lord!"

Faith reminds us that ultimately the world is in God's hands. And, therefore, tonight he sends a little Child into our midst to lead us, to touch us, to bind up our wounds and to heal us. As we kneel before him and contemplate with great wonder the power and strength of this love in all its simplicity, allow him to wipe away the tears from our eyes, and to reach deeply into our hearts. Allow the Prince of Peace to take possession of our whole being. Allow this personal and profound encounter with Divine Love, so humanly expressed, to show itself in the way we give ourselves to each other. This will free us. This will change us. This alone will save the world.

On November 20<sup>th</sup> of this year, the Feast of Christ the King, the Holy Father solemnly closed the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica. Your Bishops did the same in all the cathedrals of this beautiful country. During the entire year, we were all invited to pass through the Holy Door as a gesture of conversion, of a change of heart. The Holy Father wanted us to rediscover the powerful mercy of God and to emulate it in our lives. Indeed, we were all invited to become merciful as God is merciful to us.

My friends, today's world needs mercy. Today's world needs merciful persons. We are invited to exercise mercy within our families, towards our neighbors, in the workplace, and in all areas of social life, as we begin this new era of political life in this country. While we are searching for justice and peace, we should never neglect forgiveness and mercy.

My friends, may you and your loved ones be truly renewed in spirit this Christmas. May the Church be that guiding star that draws us all, both young and old, to Him who is born for us, so that we may be reborn in him.

May the true Light break through the darkness of our lives. And may Almighty God bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

A Blessed and peace-filled Christmas to you all!