

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE OF HIS EXCELLENCY ARCHBISHOP CHRISTOPHE PIERRE
APOSTOLIC NUNCIO TO THE UNITED STATES
ETERNAL WORD TELEVISION NETWORK
CHRISTMAS 2018

My Dear Friends in Christ,

As the Apostolic Nuncio, in the name of the Holy Father, I wish you and your loved ones a blessed and peace-filled Christmas. I express the personal closeness and spiritual affection of Pope Francis and assure you of his prayers during this holy and joyful season in which we celebrate the birth of our Savior.

What does it mean to celebrate the birth of Christ today? Perhaps we have forgotten what happened. Let me reflect with you on the Birth of Jesus ... At a moment in history, something happened. There was an event. A man and woman, awaiting their first child, journeyed to a different town to register their names during a census. They searched for a place to stay but finding none, their child was born in a cave. Do we realize today that this is what we celebrate – this event?!!!

The shepherds hastened to see this child. The angels rejoiced, singing, “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to men of good will.*” Wise men came from the East to find the newborn Infant, God made man. The Child Jesus grew, hidden from the world, until He began His public ministry. In His ministry, Jesus called disciples to accompany Him as he proclaimed the Kingdom of God and worked miracles.

They believed and followed because of His Presence – because of the Presence of God revealed mysteriously in His humanity. His miracles and his preaching were part of this Revelation, but there was more. People followed and believed because of what Christ showed Himself to be – the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the way to God, because He was God Himself. He made a proposal to them – a proposal charged with meaning: Follow me and you will see the glory of God!

His disciples later would be sent to make new disciples. This group became the Church. It was Jesus Himself who established the Church – calling and forming people to be His Church. No mere human organization, the Church is divinely instituted. Educated by Jesus to belong to Him, the disciples were called by Him to be united, to become missionaries, and to witness to Him until the end of time.

Jesus left the world a precious gift – His Church. Although we are the Church, it is His Church. This Church is the place where Jesus offers each of us the opportunity to have an encounter with Him and through Him with God the Father; to receive His Holy Spirit, the power of God to be His witnesses; and, to exercise this witness daily.

Christianity is an announcement of an Event, not something that simply happened two thousand years ago, but that is alive, that proposes something new – something that opens us to the Mystery of God and His Plan. Christianity is an announcement of an Event – of the Person of Christ who comes to save us.

God wants to save us, not as disconnected individuals, but as the Church and through the Church. In these past months, the Church appears caught in a storm. Like the disciples on the

Lake of Gennesaret, we can be frightened, knowing that we cannot save ourselves from the storms. What did the Lord want His disciples to learn? Do not be afraid. I am with you. I will save you.

In dark times, we are tempted to panic. We are scandalized when the lives of our leaders – some of our bishops and priests – fail to correspond to their vocations. But this is no time to leap from the boat. If we put ourselves outside the Church, then we are in real danger. None of us is perfect. We are all sinners. We need a Redeemer. For this Christ was born. Salvation comes to us in Christ through the Church – the living Presence of God in humanity.

The Church exists to announce God's Presence to humanity. The newborn Child mysteriously and surprisingly invites us, fragile as we are, to be part of this mission, part of this Event, to announce to the world: "*Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy which will come to all the people, for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*"