

EWTN CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2017
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 the Holy Father's personal representative in the United States, I extend to all of you and your loved ones the heartfelt good wishes of Pope Francis, who always keeps each of you in his loving embrace.

In my pastoral mission in the United States, I am privileged to travel to many sections of this beautiful country, to proclaim the joyful message of the Gospel on the Holy Father's behalf, and to accompany the Bishops of those local Churches as they lead their people on their journey of faith.

During this holy season, we are reminded of the dignity that God bestowed upon us when He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. He became one with us, in all things but sin, and he gave our human nature the grace that transforms us and gives us the right to be called sons and daughters of the Father.

In turn, Jesus our Savior gave us the unique gift of the visible Church, which He founded. Through that Church, His Body, he gives us eternal life. Through that Church, we encounter Him who is Truth itself. Through that Church, we are drawn into a unique relationship with Him, sharing His divine nature. The Church is the very means of our salvation. Her members are consecrated, and empowered through the sacraments, to become Jesus in this world.

Sadly, there may be some who, for various reasons, feel at a distance from the Church – some who may feel alienated or abandoned, perhaps through some hurt they have received. There may be the experience of separation or even estrangement from loved ones, or the living with regrets from our past. We must remember that the Church is reaching out to every one of us at this moment; she is always calling us home, and she is bidding us to come back to the Source and Center of our existence, Jesus Christ, and His saving power.

It is important to remember that the Son of God, the eternal splendor of the Father, came into this world as a little child, as a human being, to save each one of us. No one is excluded from Him. We all have the opportunity, now, to approach him who can make all things new.

Pope Francis, in a past Christmas homily, has reminded us:

“We are no longer alone and forsaken. The Virgin offers us her Son as the beginning of a new life... Today we once more discover who we are! We must put away all fear and dread, for the light shows us the way to Bethlehem... We must set out to see our Savior lying in a manger. This is the reason for our joy and gladness: this Child has been ‘born to us’; he was ‘given to us’, as Isaiah proclaims (cf. 9:5)... Like the shepherds of Bethlehem, may we too, with eyes full of amazement and wonder, gaze upon the Child Jesus, the Son of God.” (Midnight Mass, Dec. 25, 2015).

Our Holy Father has called Christmas “the feast of the *loving humility of God*”, by once reminding us of the words of Blessed Paul VI, who, one Christmas (over forty-five years ago), spoke of God coming to us:

“as the smallest, the frailest and weakest of beings...so that no one would be ashamed to approach him, so that no one would be afraid, so that all would feel close to him and draw near him, so that there would be no distance between us and him...so that each of us...could speak intimately with him, trust him...and realize that he thinks of you and loves you...*He loves you!* Think about what this means. If you understand this, if you remember what I am saying, you will have understood the whole of Christianity.” (Christmas Address to the Roman Curia, Dec. 22, 2016)

The great sense of belonging to each other, of all being one in the Body of Christ, should be the main theme of our mission in the world. We must embrace the world as Christ embraces us. That world has no boundaries or borders, and speaks only one language – the language of love. If we are approachable, our kindness and gentleness will bring healing. If we are willing to begin again, mercy and forgiveness will flow through us to others, and that same mercy and forgiveness will be upon us. The humble Jesus will take possession of our minds and hearts, and we will know true freedom.

My friends, I would like to conclude my message to you by quoting some thoughts from the Christmas Sermon of Pope Leo the Great, who said to his faithful over fifteen hundred years ago:

“Dearly beloved, today our Savior is born; let us rejoice. No one is shut out from this joy; all share the same reason for rejoicing...Our Lord...came to free us all...Christian, remember your dignity...you share in God’s own nature. Bear in mind who is your head and of whose body you are a member. Do not forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of God’s kingdom...”

My brothers and sisters, may the love of Christ, the freedom of Christ, and the peace of Christ be yours in abundance this Christmas and always.

Come, Let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!