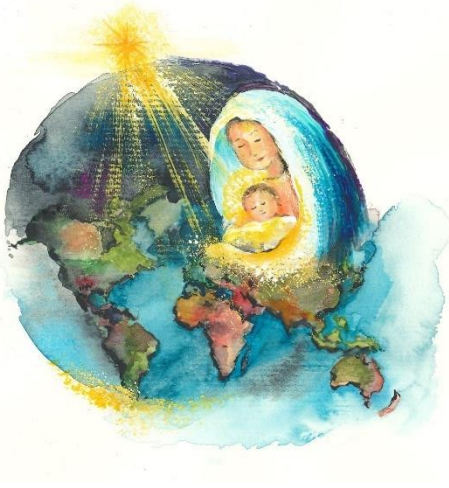


Christmas 2024



*“Jesus came to meet us, bridging all distances;
he became as close to us as the simplest,
everyday realities of our lives.
Indeed, he has another name, “Emmanuel”,
which means “God with us”, God as part of our lives,
God as living in our midst”.
(“Dilexit Nos”, 34. Pope Francis)*

Dear Sisters and Partners in Mission,

As our hearts prepare to celebrate the hope in the birth of Christ amidst the reality of human suffering, let us reflect on the manger in Bethlehem so many years ago. It remains a reminder of new life in a world marked by struggle—a world where, like today, families seek refuge, where innocent lives are caught in the grip of conflict and where the cry for justice and peace echoes across the globe.

This year, the pain of our times feels especially acute. From one corner of the world to another, across the span of so many countries, people are suffering because of exploitation and exclusion. From the inner cities to the peripheries, countless journeys are being made by hundreds of thousands to, and across borders in a desperate bid to seek food, safety and freedom.

Another year comes to an end and a new one is close to beginning. How many are the dreams that are to be shattered? What anguish will there be for many to face? These realities experienced by humanity and our common home pierce our hearts, challenging us to reflect on what the birth of Christ means in such a world.

Yet, there are *sparks of hope*. Christmas, is not a denial of suffering—it is God entering into it and holding us with great tenderness in our vulnerability -

...to share in our joys and sorrows,
...to weep with and comfort those who are in unbearable pain,
...to struggle and walk alongside those whose legs will not carry them even a few more steps
when another long stretch lies ahead to reach the border crossings,
...to shine light into our darkness.

The same God who chose to be born in a lowly stable chooses today to be present through you, in the refugee camps, the war zones, the homes of displaced families, in the grief of mothers, fathers, children, and in the hearts of all who long for peace. This is the enduring story of Christmas: that the Savior brings light where darkness seems impenetrable, love where hatred is espoused, and, peace where conflict rages.

This is the experience shared by so many of you, our dear sisters and partners in mission, who with others, reach out to offer a helping hand to those who are grief stricken, provide shelter for those who have lost

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Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd:
an NGO in Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC, UN
Our commitment to reconciliation demands that we promote justice and peace...

their homes and possessions, ensure basic needs are available for the hungry and thirsty and give protection to those who need a safe space.

Here are some *sparks of hope* that we experienced during our visits...

Your courageous witnessing amid war, uncertainty and natural disasters. Through it all, you remain steadfast in love, mercy, and reconciliation. Your faith shines through frustration and hopelessness, revealing the goodness and joy of serving others. The incarnation of Jesus is seen in every person that you meet.



Reconciliation and healing are happening in many Provinces. We are encouraged by your efforts to foster hope, improve relationships and strengthen communities. The commitment to our call for a Universal Culture of Justice within our Congregation inspires change for a more equitable future.



A new story of HOPE is being co-created through each one of you every time you reach out in compassion to the most vulnerable.

In gratitude to the God of our journey who has accompanied us during such moments over the past year, let us stand in solidarity with those who suffer and let us act courageously to build a world where the dignity of every person is honored.

As we contemplate the Christ child, born again in our hearts and homes, in our communities and ministries, let us be renewed in our call to be instruments of this hope. May the promise of "Emmanuel - God with us" fill us with a defiant daring to dream of a better tomorrow and work tirelessly to make it a reality.

*We wish you a Christmas filled with
a tender care for one another, with hope, courage and deep peace!*

*Joan Ylanda S. Cristina Inijou Erika
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Congregational Leadership Team