

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE: 2024

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today, we celebrate the Nativity of Jesus. We reflect on the mystery of the Word of God, who became flesh and dwells among us. In Him, the Word made flesh, God visits His people and pitches His tent among us. This mystery of the Light that has dispelled the darkness forever reminds us of the creation story when, by His word, He created the light that overcame the darkness. In the child born to us, God is bringing to birth a new creation through His Son. It is in and through Him that all who wish to be part of the new creation are recreated and receive the new status of children of God. As Scripture tells us, "...to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave the power to become children of God." We rejoice today because God, in Christ, has made us His children—children of light.

At Christmas, we celebrate the most enduring gift of all—a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. Unwrapped lies, lying in an empty tomb. Jesus Christ—the gift that keeps on giving, the mystery that still unfolds. Some 2,000 years ago, the very reason we exchange presents or gifts is to remind one another of God's great gift of love, echoing through the centuries: "For behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy."

Jesus Christ is the gift we can keep unwrapped—not just today, but throughout our lives. He is the grace of God among us, the Light that shines in our darkness. Jesus understands our human weakness—for He became one of us, one with us, as described in John 1:14. He knows our poverty, our sadness, our hopes, our aspirations, and our desires. He supports us as we go through life's challenges, comforts us when we worry about a loved one in difficulty, and helps us to see the goodness in our neighbor.

More importantly, Jesus Christ is the gift that can never be exhausted. He is the gift meant to be shared. We are called to carry the light of Christ back to the world—a world desperately in need of God's love and peace. As we mature in our faith journey, we realize that the real excitement and joy of Christmas lie in this great act of giving and sharing God's love with those around us. No matter our material

possessions or status, we all have something to give and share. Saint Teresa of Calcutta, a blessed woman much admired in our world today, once said, “We may not be able to give much, but we can always give the joy that springs from a heart filled with love.”

Once more, we welcome all of you—those who celebrate with us daily and weekly, and those who have been away for a while. We invite each of you to celebrate with us, and we ask that you invite a friend or family member to join us as well. May this joyful and holy season of Christmas bring you abundant divine blessings, and may He who took our human nature upon Himself in all humility plant His love firmly in your heart, so that you may be able to love with the same love with which He has loved us.

As your brother in the ministry of Christ, I ask for your continued support so that we may collectively realize our baptismal vocation and mission as the People of God. Thank you for all your kindness, support, encouragement, and generosity throughout the year. To our numerous volunteers—both visible and invisible—we pray that the newborn Christ will bless you, your families, and friends.

Merry Christmas and a grace-filled New Year in anticipation.

Devotedly yours in Christ,

Fr. Francis Chidi Ezenezi

*Pastor: Saint Peter the Apostle Roman Catholic Parish
North Bay, Ontario
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