



ROMAN CATHOLIC CHANCERY OFFICE

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CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2022

Some race of people regret the fact that they have lost the beautiful gift they call CULTURE, that they once had and lived. The CULTURE that was freely given to them, with the passing of time, was not seen as very important, or seen as the center and the heart of life among them as a race and as a people. With time, those people began to allow the secular world to dictate what was relevant and what was acceptable in the life of today, in the 'modern world.' The modern world would tell us what's in and what's not; what must be changed in order to belong.

But that CULTURE said everything about a people's way of life. It was a people's history; it was their storybook of life and living. That CULTURE brought a people together; it gave them their own name and their own face. That CULTURE made them proud. To a people, their CULTURE was what gave meaning to everything they did.

We have a God who showers us with gifts that no poor or rich person can ever buy. He showers us with gifts that last forever, not gifts that are here today and gone tomorrow; not gifts that are destroyed in an hour or a day; not gifts that end up in the latrine. The gift of his breath of life lasts forever. And how many of us appreciate and respect this great gift He gives us freely every day? And how many of us use this great gift not only for ourselves, but to do good for others in good and challenging times?

The Season we have been preparing for is here. I hope and pray that we get the space for "prayer, listening, discernment, and encounter with God and one another." How timely for us that as a Church we are presently on a Synodal Journey, a journey that has opened each one of us to a new way of being Church. We are on a journey that now opens us to a new way of saying "Yes" to the greatest gift of all, a gift that no money can buy, the gift of Jesus, God's only begotten Son. We are on a journey that has opened us to a new way of being and living Christmas!

The Christmas Season is not supposed to be a stressful time. It is not a time to be envious or jealous of others. It is not a time to outdo each other on material possessions. The Shepherds and Magi in Scripture were satisfied with God seeing them worthy to be sharers in the gift of his Son, Jesus. They came to the stable as they were, showing their great love for God, and at the same time showing their full understanding of the meaning of the moment and the meaning of Christmas. The Shepherds and magi, after seeing the Lord of Christmas, did not go on a shopping spree or did they decide to keep Christmas for themselves. They left Jesus, Mary and Joseph with full hearts; they left glorifying God for the greatest gift they ever received; a gift they paid not even one cent for.

This is our story of Christmas, given to us by God and is handed on to us by those witnesses who committed themselves to glorying God forever; witnesses who were committed to be guided by the Star and not by the changing world around them, telling them what's in and what's not; telling them to throw away that which truly gives life.

The Season of Christmas is here. The greatest gift of all has been given to each one of us. We have the choice now to allow ourselves to be guided by the STAR of unity, peace and love, or allow ourselves to be guided by the desires of the world, the desires of selfishness and greed. This is our opportunity to embrace this new way of being Church; this new way of embracing Christmas and living Christmas with and for others. (Sharing life with those who hardly have gotten over the recent Hurricane Lisa).

May we be blessed in a special way during this synodal journey as we celebrate, with each other, our thankfulness and love to God this Christmas 2022. A Savior has been born to us! He is Christ and Lord. He is Emmanuel!

To you and to all, A Merry Christmas: Peace and Love! Paz y Amor! Darangiluo luma Isieni!

Most Rev. Lawrence Sidney Nicasio, Bishop of Belize City and Belmopan