



Friday 21st December 2018

**CHRISTMAS MESSAGE OF HOPE TO THE PEOPLE OF
SOUTH SUDAN 2018: "CHRIST IS OUR HOPE AND LIGHT".**

"... Don't be afraid! I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior - yes, the Messiah, the Lord - has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! And you will recognize him by this sign: You will find a baby wrapped snugly in strips of cloth, lying in a manger." (Luke 2:10-12).

The coming of Christ is the time awaited by humanity for many centuries; we are the fortunate generation to celebrate the true coming of our Saviour, the hope of the World. The Angel announced to the Shepherds the greatest message of hope and restoration humanity has ever heard. A message from on high, from God the Saviour, the ultimate goal, the destiny of human existence. The coming of Christ is for dejected of the world to resurface, to reclaim their place in the world. Bethlehem from a city of the abandoned, a tiny town of Judah, receives the star, the light of the incarnated Son of God. The light of the Child Jesus attracts all humanity in their diversity to the smallest town of Bethlehem. There the Child Jesus begins to reconstitute the new humanity, the New People of God. Bethlehem becomes the city of Hope where the peoples of all nations meet the hope of humanity.

The Shepherds went in a hurry to Bethlehem and found the Child with his Mother and knelt in adoration to God incarnated wrapped in clothes. In their adoration the Shepherds represented all peoples of all corners of the world, all races, all classes and all cultures of the world. In one chorus we join the Psalmist in prayer: "Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker, for He is our God. We are the people He watches over, the flock under His care." (Ps 95:6).

The Republic of South Sudan is also experiencing these days, a new era of peace, crafted by the sinful hands of man, designed by the limited intentions of man. We bring it before God to bless it, to purify it, to reformulate it according to his will. We present to Him the Revitalized Agreement for the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS), and all the peace initiatives in our country, for him the King of Peace and Justice to straighten what is deformed, to bless what is sinful in it, to enlighten what is dark in it. We his children deserve the peace that comes from the mighty and glorified hand of our Savior Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Peace is the gift from on high. Human peace will not have any meaning if it is not inspired by the peace of Christ, not like that which the world gives. "Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you". (Jn 14:27). The Peace of Christ brings joy to the poor, the blind and all the rejected. It gladdens the heart, brings serenity to the soul, and converts the stubborn minds and hearts.

Today in the Republic of South Sudan, the Peace of Christ invites us to distance ourselves from falsehood, lies, hypocrisy and turn to the truth revealed by the Prince of Peace. "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders, and he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6).

Today in the Republic of South Sudan, the Peace of Christ (Christmas) is a time of reawakening in our hearts to praise and glorify God for his goodness to us (cf. Luke 2:11-12). God takes our nature and becomes one of us. "So the Word became flesh, and made his home among us. He was full of unflin-



love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son." (John 1:14). It is an invitation to defuse ourselves into others and become like them, that we may become like God, to fulfill the desires and yearnings of our hearts.

Christ comes to renew the bond of unity of the whole humanity. In the blood of Christ and in the waters of baptism, all nations and peoples in unity, no longer live for themselves but for their brother and sisters in order to love God above all. The coming of Christ has made us to be hope for others and recommits us to human solidarity. True solidarity is to be a living testimony of the love of Christ, accepting his reign over us. The star of Christ must guide us to the values that the Child Jesus brings to us, of joy, unity and peace. Christ is coming to reminds us that we must love the Lord God with all our hearts, with all our soul, and with our entire mind and to love our neighbor as ourselves. (cf. Matthew 22:37-39).

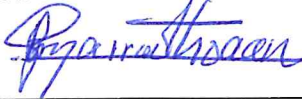
He comes with power, not like that of Caesar to destroy humanity. He is not coming with guns and heavy artillery to subdue humanity, he is not coming like the mighty Goliath verses David, he is not coming with chemical or nuclear weapons, he is not coming with money to buy humanity and turn them into slaves. He is coming with the strength and force of a child, with simplicity, humility, joy and happiness. The power of Christ is the joy and glad tidings to humanity; the power of Christ is in uniting us in our diversity, into one single people, one nation with many tongues and languages. In Christ we shall continue to be divers but one in heart and mind.

We celebrate the coming of our Saviour in a time when our country is eagerly working to implement the Revitalize Agreement of the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) signed recently, we pooled our hope in deep prayers to God, to bless and transform the work of human hands into something divine, our God will change the disfigured action of our sinful hands into what he wants. We will continue to pursue the will of God through the various activities for peace, praying with up lifted hands towards heaven for God to descend into our hearts.

Let us pray and thank God and the Prince of Peace who will truly make us experience the joy of the Shepherds in our country the Republic of South Sudan. (cf. Luke 2:20). "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased." Amen!

HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR 2019 OF PEACE, HEALING AND RECONCILIATION IN ALL THE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES OF SOUTH SUDAN.

God Bless South Sudan!



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