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OFICINA DE PRENSA DE LA SANTA SEDE



BUREAU DE PRESSE DU SAINT-SIEGE  
PRESSEAMT DES HEILIGEN STUHLS

# BOLLETTINO

SALA STAMPA DELLA SANTA SEDE

N. 161225a

Sunday 25.12.2016

## **Christmas Message: the proclamation of peace goes to the ends of the earth to reach all peoples, especially those scarred by war and harsh conflicts**

At midday today, on the Solemnity of the Nativity of the Lord, the Holy Father pronounced his traditional Christmas message before the 40,000 faithful present in St. Peter's Square and broadcast on radio and television. "Today the Church once more experiences the wonder of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph and the shepherds of Bethlehem, as they contemplate the newborn Child laid in a manger: Jesus, the Saviour", said the Pope. "The power of this Child, Son of God and Son of Mary, is not the power of this world, based on might and wealth; it is the power of love. ... It is the power that gives new birth, forgives sin, reconciles enemies, and transforms evil into good. It is the power of God". After recalling the words of the angels on the night of the Nativity: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased", the Pope emphasised that "today this message goes out to the ends of the earth to reach all peoples, especially those scarred by war and harsh conflicts that seem stronger than the yearning for peace".

After reading the message, the full text of which is reproduced below, the Pope imparted the "Urbi et Orbi" blessing from the central balcony of the Vatican Basilica.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, Happy Christmas!

Today the Church once more experiences the wonder of the Blessed Virgin Mary, St. Joseph and the shepherds of Bethlehem, as they contemplate the newborn Child laid in a manger: Jesus, the Saviour.

On this day full of light, the prophetic proclamation resounds:

"For to us a child is born,  
To us a son is given.  
And the government will be upon His shoulder;  
and His name will be called  
"Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Is 9:6)

The power of this Child, Son of God and Son of Mary, is not the power of this world, based on might and wealth; it is the power of love. It is the power that created the heavens and the earth, and gives life to all creation: to minerals, plants and animals. It is the force that attracts man and woman, and makes them one flesh, one single existence. It is the power that gives new birth, forgives sin, reconciles enemies, and transforms evil into good. It is the power of God. This power of love led Jesus Christ to strip Himself of His glory and become man; it led Him to give His life on the cross and to rise from the dead. It is the power of service, which inaugurates in our world the Kingdom of God, a kingdom of justice and peace.

For this reason, the birth of Jesus was accompanied by the angels' song as they proclaimed:

"Glory to God in the highest,

and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" (Lk 2:14).

Today this message goes out to the ends of the earth to reach all peoples, especially those scarred by war and harsh conflicts that seem stronger than the yearning for peace.

Peace to men and women in the war-torn land of Syria, where far too much blood has been spilled. Particularly in Aleppo, the site of horrendous fighting in recent weeks, it is most urgent that, in respect for humanitarian law, assistance and support be guaranteed to the sorely-tried civilian population, who continue to live in desperate straits and immense suffering and need. It is time for weapons to be still forever, and the international community to seek actively a negotiated solution, so that civil coexistence can be restored in the country.

Peace to the women and men of the beloved Holy Land, the land chosen and favoured by God. May Israelis and Palestinians have the courage and determination to write a new page of history, where hate and revenge give way to the will to build together a future of mutual understanding and harmony. May Iraq, Libya and Yemen – whose peoples suffer war and the brutality of terrorism – be able once again to find unity and concord.

Peace to the men and women in various parts of Africa, especially in Nigeria, where fundamentalist terrorism exploits even children in order to perpetrate horror and death. Peace in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, so that divisions may be healed and all people of good will may strive to undertake the path of development and sharing, preferring the culture of dialogue to the mindset of conflict.

Peace to women and men who to this day suffer the consequences of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, where there is urgent need for a common desire to bring relief to the civil population and to put into practice the commitments which have been assumed.

We implore harmony for the dear people of Colombia, which seeks to embark on a new and courageous path of dialogue and reconciliation. May such courage also motivate the beloved country of Venezuela to undertake the necessary steps to put an end to current tensions, and build together a future of hope for the whole population.

Peace to all who, in different areas, are enduring sufferings due to constant dangers and persistent injustice. May Myanmar consolidate its efforts to promote peaceful coexistence and, with the assistance of the international community, provide necessary protection and humanitarian assistance to all those so gravely and urgently in need of it. May the Korean peninsula see the tensions it is experiencing overcome in a renewed spirit of collaboration.

Peace to all who have been injured or have suffered the loss of a loved one due to the brutal acts of terrorism that have sown fear and death in the heart of many countries and cities. Peace – not merely the word, but real and concrete peace – to our abandoned and excluded brothers and sisters, to those who suffer hunger and to all the victims of violence. Peace to exiles, migrants and refugees, to all those who in our day are subject to human trafficking. Peace to the peoples who suffer because of the economic ambitions of a few, because of sheer greed and the idolatry of money, which leads to slavery. Peace to those affected by social and economic unrest,

and to those who endure the consequences of earthquakes or other natural catastrophes.

And peace to the children, on this special day on which God became a child, above all those deprived of the joys of childhood because of hunger, wars or the selfishness of adults.

Peace on earth to men and women of goodwill, who work quietly and patiently each day, in their families and in society, to build a more humane and just world, sustained by the conviction that only with peace is there the possibility of a more prosperous future for all.

Dear brothers and sisters,

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given”: he is the “Prince of peace”. Let us welcome him!

After the blessing, the Pope added: “To you, dear brothers and sisters, who have gathered in this Square from every part of the world, and to those in various countries who are linked to us by radio, television and other means of communication, I offer my greeting”.

“On this day of joy, we are all called to contemplate the Child Jesus, Who gives hope once again to every person on the face of the earth. By His grace, let us with our voices and our actions give witness to solidarity and peace. Merry Christmas to all”.

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