

**CHRISTMAS MESSAGE OF HIS LORDSHIP, MOST REV. PETER EBERE
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“GLORY TO GOD ... ON EARTH PEACE TO MEN OF GOOD WILL.” (Lk. 2: 14)

It is another Christmas! God has visited His people. As God's people, we rejoice and are glad. In our seemingly hopeless situation, in the darkest moments of our lives as individuals and as communities, the Child born in the manger is our light and salvation.

Our country has been bedeviled with all kinds of tragedies as has never been experienced in her history: the menace of Boko Haram, the emboldened operations of the 'bandits', the continuous terror of the herdsmen, the heightened insecurity in Igboland, and the current untold economic hardship in our country.

The Christmas tree and lights used in decorating our homes, places of work, places of worship, recreational spaces etc portray in tangible way, the ever abiding presence of God and the ever blossoming life of his people, their challenges notwithstanding. They buttress the point that those who hope in the Lord, "are like trees planted by the stream of running water, that yields its fruits in season, and its leaf does not wither (Ps. 1:3). On the verge of giving up, God reminds us that He is with us (Emmanuel).

Christmas offers humanity a new beginning in our relationship with God. It presents him the opportunity to reflect on the immense love of God. Christmas reiterates the fact that the child Jesus is our hope. God comes to humanity to save and heal. In the hopelessness and darkness of the human condition, the light shines out for humanity to have life.

Directed by the star, the wise men from the east travelled far to worship the "king of the Jews." The guiding star made them reach their destination. The plot of the cunning and wicked Herod could not extinguish the light to the Gentiles. The light continued to shine, for the darkness [can] not overcome it (Jn. 1:5).

In our country that can be described as a rudderless ship in a tumultuous ocean, the shining light Jesus Christ is still our compass. Another opportunity has been offered to us. The savior of the world is in our midst. We can only thank the Father for the priceless gift of his son, Jesus Christ. Let the people of God not give up. Let us not be daunted by our challenges, for 'those who hope in the Lord, will renew their strength (Isaiah 40:31).

Isaiah while describing the newborn king foretold him to be a 'wonderful counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of peace' (Isaiah 9: 6-7).

Christmas is the time we heed the admonition of St. Paul to "agree with one another, live in peace, and the God of love and peace will be with you." (2 Cor. 13:11). Our ugly experiences of division and conflict cannot thwart God's plan for humanity. God wants his people to experience joy and peace. This is the reason for the season. This is the reason he has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light, in his son, Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 2:9b).

Having experienced various conflicts, numerous setbacks, multi-dimensional threat to life and existence, the Great light is our hope, light and peace. We have every reason to celebrate for "the people who walked in darkness has seen a great light..." (Isaiah 9:2).

The faint hearted should rejoice, the gloomy faces should cheer up. For the Prince of peace is in our midst. He brought peace to the world. The Christmas song must be sung. We join the angels in chorusing, "glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to men of good will" (Lk. 2: 14).

Wishing you a peaceful and joyous Christmas celebration.

Peace be with you all



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*Given on December 14, 2021, the Memorial of St. John of the Cross at the Ekwulobia
Diocesan Chancery.*