



Very dear Sisters and Friends,

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year!

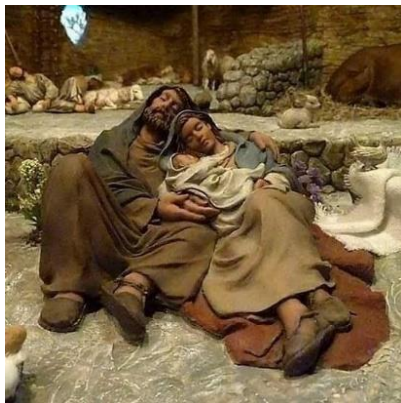
Christmas has special significance this year as we are still groping in the darkness of the Covid-19 pandemic. We need a break from the lockdowns. The period of waiting is over. The time has come to celebrate



Christmas, to celebrate God's loving presence with us – **EMMANUEL**. The mystery of the Incarnation is all about the eternal **WORD** becoming flesh in the person of Jesus and dwelling among us. The fourth Evangelist describes it as a journey of the light: "The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world" (Jn 1:9). Christmas thus recalls God's pilgrimage to dwell among us, and God's subsequent life-giving presence journeying with us in Jesus, the **LIGHT** that enlightens every human being. In Johannine theology, light

symbolizes the spiritual awakening granted to the believers, who are also invited to become **CHILDREN OF LIGHT**. For Saint Paul, "the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true" (Eph 5:9). The presence of God among us is a light for our journey here and now – a light that enlightens us; heals us; transforms us; and enables us to become children of light. Enlightened by the light of life, let us uphold what is good, what is right, and what is true irrespective of the situation in which we find ourselves.

The infancy narratives tell us that Jesus was born as a homeless child in a colonized land (Lk 2:1-6). Joseph and Mary feared for the life of the Child Jesus and had to flee to Egypt to ensure a safer home for the new-born



(Mt 2:13-15). The parents of Jesus shared the anxiety, the dramatic situation, and the experience of the violence of each **MIGRANT FAMILY** – all those who are forced to flee from their homelands due to persecutions, famines, or wars. Gustavo Gutiérrez has put it so beautifully: "The God who became flesh in Jesus is the hidden God of whom the prophets speak to us. Jesus shows himself to be such precisely in the measure that he is present via those who are the absent, anonymous people of history, those who are not the controllers of history, namely, the mighty, the socially acceptable, 'the wise and the learned' (Mt 11:25)"¹ The child Jesus identifies with all who experience the fear of death, who face inhumane displacements, suffer humiliation, alienation, and indifference. Christmas this year invites us to

have a special place in our hearts for the suffering, invisible people. In the context of the pandemic, we cannot but think of the insecurity, uncertainty, and fear that all of us experienced. Jesus calls us to make a journey from our fear of uncertainties to the reassuring hope of God's healing presence among us.

CHRISTMAS TODAY

Sisters and friends, let us make our Christmas this year more meaningful by celebrating our identity as children of light at the heart of our current crisis. May we become beacons of hope for the suffering people on the margins or peripheries. May the very experiences of the Covid-19 pandemic be a guide and a light for our journey forward.

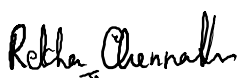
¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *The God of Life* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1991), 86.

The gift of Christmas – Emmanuel – affirms the ongoing intervention of God in human history and celebrates the indwelling presence of Jesus, the eternal Word and the true Light, who empowers us and illumines us to become children of light, children of God. The light of Jesus enables us to overcome the setbacks, disappointments, and fears of the pandemic, and move beyond our past experiences. Let the grace of Christ heal us and transform our unforgiveness, envy, laziness, and selfishness. Yes, we are invited to become a **BEACON OF HOPE** for those who are in the darkness of the insecurity of our trying times. Let our celebrations this year help us diminish our egoism and grow more in that self-respect and self-love which lead us to live for one another, especially for all those on the peripheries who need our kindness and generosity in our difficult times. Let us become God’s comforting presence to one another through our positive gaze, lifegiving words, and compassionate deeds. In our daily lives, let us make decided efforts and right choices which will help sustain the integrity of creation, God’s dwelling place and our “common home”. This is a meaningful way of responding to the call of our times and celebrating Christmas 2020!

As the new year ushers in, are we ready to set out on a **NEW JOURNEY** in search of something different? Biblical setting out is always heading towards an unknown future prepared by God. We know that the trials of the present will be blessings for the future world. The pandemic invited us to set out on a new road, trusting that a new beginning is possible and believing that this new beginning is an imperative now. This is the call of the hour. Let us join the voice of the Prophet Isaiah: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” (Is 9:2). In the face of all the anguish and anxiety of the last ten months during the pandemic, we have seen the heroism of our health personnel; the unselfish service and generosity of our neighbours; the tireless work of scientists to develop the right vaccines; the efforts of the governments to make it available to the maximum number of people. We have been touched by the outstanding commitment of so many people. They leave us with hope that there is something more in store for us than the helplessness, the brokenness, and the panic of the pandemic that threaten to destroy our normal life, financial security, and well-being. So many lives testify that God is journeying with us, reviving our humanity and recreating our world. They give us a vision of a new world of light, where human care, optimism, and daring spirit empower us to cope with the uncertainties of life. Let us make the experiences of the pandemic a light for our ongoing journey. We will then be bringing Christ into the world. This is Christmas!

As children of light, let us walk in the newness of life in the New Year fostering more humanised families, communities, and societies by ardently grasping the blessings of God!

Every prayer for a joyful Christmas and a blessed 2021 for each one of you!



Sister Rekha Chennattu, RA
Superior General

23 December 2020