

GENERAL SECRETARY'S MESSAGE

"A child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called ... Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6.

Christmas! It's the most blessed time of the year. A time of recollection of the generous and bountiful blessings the Lord has showered upon us all through the year. We certainly have countless reasons to be thrilled, appreciative and delighted this special season. None the less can we ever count all His umpteen blessings He has bestowed upon us - life, health, family, talents, abilities, opportunities, accomplishments and so on and so forth? No, we cannot!!! That's what Christmas brings to each one of us.

Christmas is also a time to focus on the promises of God which help us continue our journey of life amidst struggles, challenges, temptations, sicknesses and whole lot of negativities that engulf us. God has promised us to give us everything we need. He has promised comfort and rest when we are weary and heavy laden and facing troubles. He bestows us with the gift of peace and freedom from fear – "Fear not, for I am with you always". In Zechariah *chapter 8, verses 4-8*, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age. And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.....I will bring them back and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness.'" Here, the Lord on the one hand promised the wisdom and blessings of old age and on the other the happiness and satisfaction to be blessed with sons and daughters who are healthy, strong and cheerful. He has promised all his care and protection as he will be our God.

Christmas is also a time of experiencing the magnitude of forgiveness which the Son of God accorded to many, a time to express our gratitude that he loves us still while we are sinners. When that woman was caught in adultery, Jesus challenged all those gathered around her and asked the one who had not sinned in his life, to throw the first stone at her. When each one of them left the site without throwing even one stone at her, Jesus told her to leave and to sin no more. This is how much he loves us all.

Christmas is also a time of sharing love, peace and joy among the people. It reminds us of the ministry that Jesus took upon himself to preach the good news to the poor, to proclaim freedom for the prisoners, recovery of sight to the blind, to release the broken and to proclaim the word of God. There might be many around us this Christmas, in dire need of our love, care and protection - trafficked, refugees, elderly, weak, sick, abandoned, rejected and humiliated. While we are busy celebrating Christmas, we need to keep such in mind and see what little we may be able to do for them.

May the God almighty continue to bless us bountifully and help us spread the message of love which He shared with us by sending His son Jesus Christ to us. May we be renewed through His Holy Spirit to work for peace and justice and His name be glorified.

Wish you all a Blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year 2018.

Yours in His Mission,

Alwan Masih
General Secretary
CNI Synod