

World Council of the Marianist Family Christmas Message 2017

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great Light. (Isaiah 9:2)

God! Where is the light? We've been looking for it, yet many of the days this past year have seemed very dark. We have suffered from hurricanes, fires, and floods. Humans have killed other humans in terrorist acts out of fear, hatred, or reasons we can't understand. Truth too often has been the casualty of people wanting to have their own way or to have more power. Our fighting has gone beyond sticks and stones to guns, bombs, and even the threat of nuclear annihilation. Even our words have become weapons as we take sides on political issues and make enemies of our neighbors, co-workers, and even family members.

Yes, God, our times can seem very dark and hopeless. Where are you? Where is the light?

As troubled and powerless as we may feel, we look for the "Good News."

- Our Christian heritage reminds us that Jesus did not enter our world as a powerful King, but as a baby dependent on Mary's "Yes" and ongoing nurturing.
- Our Catholic leaders remind us that "If you want peace, work for justice." (Pope Paul VI) and that "Everything is connected." (Pope Francis, *Laudato Si*, #117)
- Our Marianist wisdom reminds us of
 - o The genius of connecting the lay and religious vocations into one interdependent family. This echoes Pope Francis' call to see how we are all connected to each other and the natural world.
 - o Communicating words of encouragement over space and time. Today our "letters" may be electronic but the message is the same – to connect people in a positive way. Perhaps we need to be mindful of how we communicate on social media and face to face communication so that our words are true, loving, and respectful. Marianists can be models of civil dialogue in society's war of words.
 - o The importance of caring for marginalized people – immigrants, those who are hungry, those who have lost their way, those who disagree with us...

The good news is that Jesus is living in us! We are people called to make a positive difference in the world. Sometimes it is because of the darkness that we see the need to ACT – to be the face of Jesus to the powerless. We Marianists are people who, together with others of good will, work for peace, justice, and environmental sustainability.

Already in many places we see people rising up and saying, "It is up to us." Not me alone, but us together. We Marianists have experience and gifts to share in these times that call for new ways. Our charism calls us to work together interdependently.

As Adele says in her 1807 letter, "Like the Magi let us not return from the crib by the same route. That is, let us lead an entirely new life, a changed life, one transformed in God" (63.3)

Dark days call us to be the light of Christ because He lives in us.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

