
CHRISTMAS GREETINGS, 1994



On the occasion of Christmas I wish you **PEACE**.

"Peace to you, the poor among us, it is love that speaks in you.
Peace to you, loving hearts, it is the future that stirs in you.
Peace to you who cry out, it is hope that is in labour in you.
Peace to you who yearn for justice, it is this hope that you crave for.
Peace to you, beating hearts, it is tenderness that weaves its web in you.
Peace to you who watch and wait, it is daylight that is arising in you.
Peace to you the builder of peace, it is God who takes on your features.
Peace to you who are tortured for justice, you are free.
Happy the peacemakers, they shall be called children of God."

On the occasion of Christmas I wish you **LOVE**.

"If we bring love where there is none, we harvest love.
May my eyes, my hands my heart, my mouth build each day a world of love, for God is love.
This sad woman who looks at me, here is my mouth to bring her a smile from God.
This ashen-faced child, here are my eyes for God to look lovingly on him/her.
This exhausted, discouraged man, here is my whole body to encourage him and my voice to tell him, 'Rest a while.'
This delinquent child, here is my heart to love him/her even more than ever,
of the very love of God."

On the occasion of Christmas I wish you much **JOY**, a joy which no one will ever be able to take from you.

"O Spirit of joy, how often have I found you along the road of the unexpected!
How often did you spring forth from the games of laughing, peaceful children playing under my window,
from the young lovers planning projects for tomorrow,
from the elderly whose hands and face are but a long story of love,
from this friend of nature who looks fondly and tenderly at the tree,
from this contemplative sister whose face is like a reflection of the smile of God,
from these young handicapped persons totally absorbed in a basketball game."

If each one of us, at the end of the day, looking back on the hours passed,
could discover a sign of yours, Spirit of Joy... the joy of God."

On the occasion of Christmas I wish you a heart filled with **GRATITUDE**.

"A heart that can recognise daily all the good and the great that is accomplished in each family,
A heart that can say Thank You for the thousand and one kindnesses in everyday life,
A heart that can say Thank You to God for His countless graces, for His limitless forbearance,
for His unsurpassing love,
A heart that can recognise in trials and pain the strength and support that come for Him;
His reassuring presence, day in, day out, allows us to hope and never forget Him.
A heart that realises that life is the greatest good and that it comes from God,
that He holds all of it in the palm of His hand.
Like a cup I raise my hands to You, Lord, to offer You this day, this life that You have given
me, with all it has given me that was good and not so good, with its bursts of generosity,
its moments of weakness and its disappointments too.
I thank You especially for the peace and friendship that You so kindly share with me."

On the occasion of Christmas I wish you much **HOPE**.

"Hope does not betray, St. Paul says, because we are carried along by the love of God
which was deposited in our hearts by the Holy Spirit.
Hope is founded on this certainty, and it is always turned to the future. It anticipates
the future and prepares it. And in a certain way, hope prepares the future today
as well as the unfolding of time.
Hope is all the more necessary since the greatest temptation today is probably despair.
'Faith does not surprise me,' Péguy has God say [in *The Little Prince*],
'I burst out so much in my creation...' It is faith that is easy, and it would be impossible not to believe.
But hoping is difficult. And despair is the easy thing, the slippery slope, the great temptation...
But Hope is the child that will travel the world. Happy are those whose hope is on everyday life."

On the occasion of Christmas I pray for the 15,000 families of our Diocese.

"May our families, in whatever way they are made up nowadays, be places of love.
May our families be places of respect because we recognise the value of each one
and the mystery that is in each one.
May our families be places of dialogue that allows us to get to better know the other
and let the other get to know us better.
May our families be places of sharing and forgiveness, in order to contribute to the growth
and enrichment of all its members.

May our families be places of hope and places where God, 'God-with-Us,' is found,
the God who comes among us to make His home in us."

+ François Thibodeau ym

+ François Thibodeau, C.J.M.
Bishop of Edmundston

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