



22 December 2020
Christmas Message

Dear Confreres, Sisters, Lay Mission Partners, Friends, Benefactors and Relatives,

In the incarnation of the Word of God, we celebrate the selfless love of God who saves and empowers us by accepting our humanity. Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, who glorifies the tremendous significance of the humanity of Jesus, says: "What has not been assumed has not been healed." His insight into the event of incarnation challenges those who reject the very act of God accepting humanity in its totality. In Jesus, God assumes our human reality and acknowledges our vulnerability and fragility. By this divine humility, we are healed; our relationship with God and one another is restored. On Christmas, this acceptance is manifested in the child of Bethlehem, born of a migrant family at the periphery of the society.

This year we celebrate Christmas amid the COVID-19 pandemic. This invisible virus exposes our vulnerability and fragility as individuals and as a human family. Because of this pandemic, many of us will have a confined Christmas celebration deprived of the customary delight of coming together as families and friends, and as communities. It will be a silent Christmas that would enable us to recapture the radiant scene of the birth of the Lord as narrated in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke.

The pandemic opens our eyes to see the inequalities among the nations and the most vulnerable people in our families and communities. They are people who suffer mainly because of their frail health, faulty healthcare and conditions of poverty. The pandemic and the preventive protocols have not only taken a heavy toll on life, but also resulted in far-reaching economic, social, psychological and spiritual consequences.

The proposals of Pope Francis as the attitudes needed to respond to the situation of the refugees can also be our attitudes towards our communities and families, that is, to welcome, to protect, to promote and to integrate. As missionaries, religious or lay people, we try to reach out to the weak and vulnerable in our families, communities, congregations and society. We integrate and make part of the community all those who feel excluded and abandoned. We care for those who are infected with the virus. We give our share of blessing to those most affected by the economic consequences of the lockdowns. We console those who have lost their loved ones to the corona virus.

On that silent and holy night, the angel of the Lord announced to the shepherds, "Don't be afraid! Look, I bring you a great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people." (Lk 2:10). Under these circumstances of vulnerability and uncertainty, let us assume the angel's role by becoming a message of hope and assurance to everyone, that we are together in this struggle. God heals us by assuming our humanity, accepting and embracing us; when we do likewise, we can authentically say we are one family and one community celebrating Christmas and welcoming the graces of the New Year..

We wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Budi Kleden, SVD
and the Leadership Team