



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

With the entire Christian world, we proclaim joyfully the Christmas message, “*For a child is born to us, a son is given us. ... They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace* (Isaiah 9:5).” Both at home and in our parishes, our Christmas celebrations acknowledge that Isaiah’s prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, born into our human situation at Bethlehem almost two-thousand years ago.

During these holy days, we turn our hearts and minds to that event in that obscure town in what we now call the Holy Land. Yet, particularly this year, our thoughts are mingled with the sad reality of violence and conflict that mars what should be the unalloyed joy and peace of this time. I ask you to join me wholeheartedly in praying for peace in the Holy Land, peace in Ukraine, peace throughout the world for every nation, among every people, and in every home. United in mind and heart, let us ask the Prince of Peace, who draws so close to us, to quell the violence of war and heal the hearts of all who suffer the indignities of wartime.

One of my favorite prayers for this season comes from an older translation of Holy Mass. It recalls that the gift of the Christ Child bestowed upon us becomes the very gift we have received that we must give as a gift (cf. Matthew 10:8). Let us pray this prayer together during these days for the gift of peace to descend upon us, and through us, to the whole world.

*Almighty God and Father of light, a child is born for us and a son is given to us.
Your eternal Word leaped down from heaven in the silent watches of the night
and now your Church is filled with wonder at the nearness of God.
Open our hearts to receive his life and increase our vision with the rising of dawn,
that our lives may be filled with his glory and his peace,
who lives and reigns for ever and ever. Amen.*

May we use these next fourteen days of the Christmas season to renew our commitment to remain close to the Incarnate Word by worshipping with our parish families, praying in our homes, and by imitating our Lord through humble acts of mercy and service, especially to those most in need. By sharing our gifts, we share the Father’s love we have received in Christ and, in turn, will know genuine joy.

Finally, it is a great blessing for me to celebrate my first Christmas as your bishop. I am grateful and humbled by your warm welcome, steadfast faith, and continued prayers. I pray that through the intercession of the Holy Family, you and your families will be blessed throughout the Christmas season and coming year.

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Timothy C. Senior
Bishop of Harrisburg