



# NATIONAL CATHOLIC SECRETARIAT

## OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

CENTENARY HOUSE, NEAR TETTEH QUARSHIE INTERCHANGE

Tel: +233-0302-500491/0302-976222

E-mail: [president@cbcggha.org](mailto:president@cbcggha.org)/  
[secretarygeneral@cbcggha.org](mailto:secretarygeneral@cbcggha.org)

P. O. Box KA 9712  
Airport - Accra  
Ghana/West Africa

### **PASTORAL LETTER FOR THE SEASON OF ADVENT ISSUED BY THE GHANA CATHOLIC BISHOPS' CONFERENCE (GCBC)**

On the occasion of this year's season of Advent which begins on Sunday, November 29, 2020, we, the Catholic Bishops of Ghana, send you this Pastoral Letter on the theme: "*Welcoming Christ, Living in Peace with All.*" This theme is inspired firstly by the spirit and character of the Advent Season which invites all of us to prepare our minds and hearts to welcome Christ the Saviour at Christmas and secondly, by the upcoming General Elections on December 7 this year and the need to strive to live in peace in the period before, during and after the elections.

#### **Advent: A Season of Newness and Hope**

The season of Advent marks the beginning of a new year of worship. It is the Church's season of beginnings, expectation and hope, a season of firm confidence in a loving and kind God who continues to encounter us and call us towards a future full of new possibilities. It is our fervent prayer that God will make new things happen for us as we continue to believe in Him and in His promise: "*See, I am doing something new!*" (Isaiah 43:19).

#### **Welcoming Christ as Saviour of the World**

Furthermore, Advent is the pre-Christmas season during which we prepare for the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ at Christmas. Key to such celebration is meditation on the Word of God and its application to our lives.

In our most recent Communique of November 13, 2020, we took the opportunity to share with you the important role that the Word of God plays in our lives as Christians and as people of goodwill. We stated that the Word of God is an inherent transforming power which enables it at all times to achieve the purpose for which it was intended. "*At the centre of every Christian formation is Christ himself. There can be no sound formation without Christ, for he is our only teacher and instructor (Matt 23:8.10). All Christians by virtue of their baptism and their incorporation into Christ, are called to holiness. Holiness has to do with, among other things, shaping our will and continually forming our consciences in the light of the Gospel of Christ.*"

As the year 2020 draws to a close, we would like to reiterate our call for all Christians to take up the Word of God, read it, meditate on it and apply it to their everyday living.

### **Living in Peace with all People**

The Word of God also invites all of us to live in peace with one another. In the Book of Isaiah, the Prophet refers to the period of the Messiah as one of Messianic harmony. Here, traditional enemies will live with one another in harmony and in peace (cf. *Isaiah 2:4*). It is for this reason that we need to think of ourselves more and more as one family dwelling in a common homeland called Ghana.

In the New Testament, on the occasion of the birth of Jesus, St. Luke's Gospel tells us that angels of God from heaven descended on earth and sang "Glory to God in the Highest and Peace on Earth to all people of Goodwill" (*Luke 2:1ff*). The Gospel makes us aware that the birth of the Saviour of the world brought peace to humanity. However, it is ours to actualize and live this peace in our daily lives. This is why we wish to appeal once again to all our fellow-citizens to desire and actively work for peace before, during and after the December 7, 2020 elections. We wish to remind all Ghanaians once again that elections are not war; elections are not about violence, but an important democratic exercise in which all registered voters in Ghana exercise their right to vote to determine the direction for the development of our nation.

While we repeat our confidence in the Electoral Commission to conduct free, fair and transparent elections, we equally urge them not to become complacent in carrying out this constitutional duty. We also appeal to all political parties, their leaders and supporters and indeed all Ghanaian citizens to live in peace and refrain from all activities that can disturb the peace of our dear nation before, during and after the elections. After the elections, we should work together to build one country Ghana. We should not expect everything from those who govern us, but must welcome our common responsibilities in working together as one people to develop our beloved country.

We pray that just as we have done on seven different occasions in the past, we will also hold this year's elections so creditably that we can celebrate our growing democracy and the coming of the Saviour's birth at Christmas in peace, harmony and joy.

### **COVID-19 and Safety Protocols**

We wish to once again appeal to our fellow citizens to uphold the highest and noblest of ethics and good conduct, and to observe religiously all the COVID-19 hygienic protocols, particularly in the festivities of the season. Let us all stay safe by wearing our face masks, observing social distancing, washing our hands regularly under running water with soap and also use the hand sanitizer frequently.

## **A Call to Participate in Sunday Eucharistic Celebration**

We have observed that since the resumption of liturgical celebrations after the lockdown, some of our faithful have not been attending Holy Mass, or prefer to follow Holy Mass on Television and other digital platforms. We reiterate that “virtual reality is no substitute for the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist... There are no sacraments on the Internet; and even the religious experiences possible there by the grace of God are insufficient apart from real life-world interaction with other persons of faith” (*The Church and Internet 9*).

We want to remind all Catholics that we all have an obligation to attend Mass on Sunday as it is the day of the Lord’s resurrection. Due to the significance of the day, watching or hearing Mass through the digital network cannot dispense anyone from the obligation to be part of the Eucharistic assembly. Active participation and sharing in the Body and Blood of Christ are the surest means for the Church to bond together as members of the same family, Church-Family of God (*Ecclesia in Africa 63*).

As we begin a new liturgical year, we entreat all Catholics who are not bound by age or sickness to make the effort to participate physically in Sunday Holy Masses while ensuring that all the COVID-19 protocols are faithfully observed.

## **Conclusion**

Finally, we wish you all a fruitful preparation for Christmas during this Advent Season, a happy celebration of the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and a prosperous and peace-filled New Year.



**MOST REV. PHILIP NAAMEH**  
**METROPOLITAN ARCHBISHOP OF TAMALE &**  
**PRESIDENT, GHANA CATHOLIC BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE**

**SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2020**