



CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM BISHOP PHILIP WRIGHT

Anglican Diocese of Belize

John 1:6-18

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. ⁸He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. ⁹The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

10 He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. ¹²But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

14 And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵(John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.") ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

Greetings and best wishes this Christmas Season from the clergy and people of the Anglican Diocese of Belize. For quite some time now I have viewed life on earth as primarily trying to make sense of, and thereby trying to cope with, the disconnect between what should be and what really is. How we respond to this disconnect largely determines what we ultimately make of our life and, as such, can have a direct correlation to the quality of the life we live. This applies to our personal life, our professional life, and our religious life. The inconsistencies and contradictions of life have been a source of interest and challenge to the believer and non-believer alike for a very long time.

The celebration of Christmas, which for me does not make much sense without an appreciation of the preceding Advent Season (largely because of the rich and significant scripture readings which cover the season), ought to forcefully bring to our collective and individual consciousness the fact that we continue to live in this disconnect I mentioned earlier. Not only does our annual celebration occur between the first and second coming of Christ, but it also occurs within the space of our disconnected realities – between what should be and what is. We simply need to take a look at what is happening around the world these days to appreciate how true this is. Nationally and internationally we see the failings of those in leadership; the injustices perpetuated by those with the power to do so; the debased behaviour of dictators and criminals alike; and the increasing disregard for the values and principles we once were prepared to adhere to. Accusations of corruption and the betrayal of the public trust is a far too prevalent reality. It is nothing new, in many respects, but it gives credence to the realization that all is not well with this world.

So above all, the Seasons of Advent and Christmas should serve to motivate us to continue the work our Lord has asked us to do in His name. Jesus came to reveal to us that the God He called Abba and Father, the God we in turn call Father, is a God of love and justice, grace and mercy. This same God now looks to us to work for the same until 'the earth may be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea'.

The aspirations of the Christmas story need not exist in the realm of 'wishful thinking.' Instead, they must become that which bridges the divide between what should be and what is. We, who take it upon ourselves to celebrate this annual commemoration of the most significant moment in human history, must also seek to live out the mandate laid upon us as a result of this affirmation - God did act definitively and deliberately in history by sending His only begotten Son into the world.

In the true spirit of the prophets of old and new, in obedience to our Lord Himself, let us work to make the world a better place for all of God's children.

Let us pray:

ALMIGHTY God, who has given us your only-begotten Son to take our nature upon him, and as at this time to be born of a pure Virgin: Grant that we being regenerated, and made your children by adoption and grace, may daily be renewed by your Holy Spirit; through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the same Spirit, ever one God, world without end. Amen.

A MOST BLESSED CHRISTMAS SEASON TO ONE AND ALL