



ပြည်ထောင်စုသမ္မတမြန်မာနိုင်ငံတော်ကက်သလစ်ဆရာတော်ကြီးများအဖွဲ့ချုပ်

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Our People Gasp For Peace, Give Peace a Chance.

Another New Year is at the threshold of the world.

In parts of the world, people will exuberantly greet one another, “Happy New Year!” To those in conflict zones and senseless wars, it is a challenge “to ring out the old and ring in the new dawn” of hope. To many, Ukraine might come to mind, as suffering from what Pope Francis poignantly called, the “famine of peace”.

But the Pope also points out a grave famine of peace in other regions and other theatres of this Third World War. He singled out conflicts and humanitarian crises in the Middle East, Myanmar, Haiti, and the Sahel region of Africa. Yes, the compassionate heart of Pope Francis, is moved by every tear of innocent suffering. He has consistently mentioned Myanmar in every plea for peace.

What can be the new hope to our people in Myanmar at the dawn of the New Year?

The interlude of peace of the last decade evaporated overnight. Do our graceful people deserve the fate that fell on them?

Christmas message was not just Christmas trees, lights, Santa Claus and shopping malls. The Christmas of the Bible is different. It is about a poor family harassed; it is about the powerlessness of simple people. The Christmas week also remembers the massacre of innocent children perpetrated by an angry Herod. True, parts of our world today, gasp with horror and revulsion at school destruction, wars, and abuse that take the lives of our babies, children and youth. The famine of peace is real, strangling all hope.

We can only imagine the brokenness after the first Christmas, the brokenness of the world that God sent his son, the Messiah into; a time when the dangerous power of the rich and politically armed could wipe out families in an instant if they didn't do their will, a time when Israel lay subject not only to the forces of Roman Empire but to their own cruel leaders who ate from Rome's hands and grew drunk on its wine of prestige and power and also ate out of the bowels of the vulnerable people.

How did God choose to fight this perversion of power? With love. unconditional love. The only thing that power can't fight. The only thing that power fears. The message of Christmas is Peace conceived in the womb of love, fathered by justice. Let my dear country hear the pacific gentle message of Christmas :

“Glory to God in the highest and peace to all men and women of goodwill.”

During his visit to Myanmar, The Pope’s persistence for peace made him give a mandate to the Catholic Church – “ Be the peace makers – Heal the world.” In pursuance of his mandate, the Myanmar church makes an earnest appeal: Our people gasp for peace; Give peace a chance. The Pope speaks of a ‘widespread famine of peace’ in the world. Let all of us in Myanmar, wage only one struggle: for peace.

The eight decades of conflict in this country have been never against any other country; it is brother against brother, the tears of all our sisters, misery and mayhem in the lives of our children. The standing army, the non-state actors in the conflict, millions spent on arms every year, thousands who were killed in the conflicts, and millions displaced internally and externally, point to the futile attempts at solving issues by armed conflict. No one has comprehensive control and or a win. War and human suffering are chronic without any single cross-border war in recent history.

We earnestly appeal to the Army, SAC, NUG and PDF the following :

1. By mutual consensus, **declare the Month of January as the cease-fire month** and continue to explore the possibility of extending this approach. Let the guns fall silent, and believe in the peaceful resolution of issues through dialogue.
2. Set up and respect humanitarian corridors to areas of acute humanitarian crises, allowing free access to national and international agencies.
3. Revive the Panglong Peace process, involving more religious leaders, and regional and international stakeholders.
4. Wage other wars together: against Pandemics, climate change, economic turbulence, and illicit economy. Help in reducing the suffering of the millions of victims of “famine of peace” and starving in the inhumane settlements away from their homes: think of the tears of young mothers and their infant children languishing in jungle camps.

Peace is Possible; Peace is the only way. Let a New Myanmar of hope rise in 2023.

With the hope of peace, wishing everyone a new year of reconciliation,

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+ Charles Cardinal Bo., SDB
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