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2024

CHRISTMAS APPEAL

“LIGHT DAWNS FOR THE RIGHTEOUS.”

(PSALM 97:11)

Dear <formal or informal salutation>,

The Star of Bethlehem is one of the most recognizable images of the biblical Christmas story. It is the bright light that led those who had the wisdom to see, known as the Three Wise Men from the East, to the newborn Jesus. For Christians, the star symbolizes the divine light that is the source of hope and all goodness. It is this light “that dawns for the righteous.”

I am writing this letter while visiting some rural communities in El Salvador that are poor and lack the basic services that are their right. These communities seem to have been forgotten by the state and by other institutions. In the same communities, we were welcomed by groups, mostly women, who had organized themselves into “savings clubs” and cooperatives. The women have been able to save money and have also been able to start small income-generating activities. The savings and the income they make have enabled them to improve their living conditions such as repairing a leaky roof and sending their children to school.

Canadian Jesuits International supports these initiatives through its work with a Jesuit network called COMPARTE which means “sharing.” This network helps communities across Latin America share knowledge and initiatives on how to generate income to have more dignified conditions of life. The enthusiasm, optimism, hard work and dreams that I heard from the women in these communities, in what would otherwise seem to be bleak conditions, was inspiring. They are truly a light for the righteous.

I find this Scripture for the Christmas Dawn Mass especially comforting in a year that has seen so much darkness. I think of intractable wars and conflicts such as those in Gaza, Myanmar, Sudan, Ukraine and now Lebanon, that have forcibly displaced millions of people, the climate crisis, the rise of authoritarianism, poverty and inequality worldwide, to name a few.



Paula Casado Aguirregabiria/JRS

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It would be easy to despair in the face of these enormous global challenges. But as we reflect on our faith and the promise of this passage, “light dawns for the righteous,” we can dare to hope.

Psalm 97:11 is a powerful reminder that while it may seem that the dark forces of tyranny, greed, corruption, extremism, and indifference rule the world, they are no match for the defenders of justice, peace, and righteousness. They are no match for the energy, optimism, commitment, and hard work of the women in the rural communities of El Salvador.

This work could not happen without your support. CJI’s Jesuit partners in Africa, Asia, and Latin America and you, our faithful supporters, are helping to bring light to dark places in the world where the poor and marginalized struggle to meet basic needs, where human rights are violated, and where the absence of peace forces people to flee.

The Jesuit-based **RSAI Solidarity Network of the Indigenous Apostolate** harnesses the light – the wisdom and leadership – of Indigenous women in Latin America to defend their ancestral lands and cultures against exploitative industries that destroy their natural resources and communities.

Radio Progreso and ERIC (Reflection, Investigation and Communications Team) shed light on the social, economic, and political situation in Honduras so that its citizens are properly informed and empowered to bring about change for the common good.

In South Sudan, **Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)** is a light on the feet of thousands of refugees fleeing the war in Sudan. JRS provides health services, as well as safe spaces and educational support so that children can be fully integrated into local schools.

The **Human Life Development and Research Centre (HLDRC)** in India is a beacon for tea workers, especially women, who are often deprived of their rights. The HLDRC educates tea workers about their rights and how to obtain them. It also provides livelihood support to the poorest among them.

Thank you for continuing to support Canadian Jesuits International and our partners in the Global South. Thanks to you, “light dawns on the righteous,” reflecting God’s love and call for justice for all humanity.

I wish you a happy and blessed Christmas.


Jenny Cafiso
Executive Director

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THE RIGHTEOUS.**”



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