

2025 CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

IN JESUS CHRIST IS OUR HOPE FOR PEACE

Dearly Beloved in Christ. Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior born for us in union with the Holy Spirit.

I greet you with deep affection and prayerful concern as we celebrate the joyful mystery of Christmas—the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Once again, God enters our human history, not with noise or force, but in silence, humility, and love. He comes as a child laid in a manger, to remind us that our true hope for peace is found in Him alone.

I am keenly aware that this Christmas does not feel easy for some of you. Some families in some part of our country will celebrate this Christmas without enough food on their tables or peace in their communities as a result of insecurity that is presently plaguing our country. Similarly, many young people today are burdened by unemployment and uncertainty about their future. Parents worry daily about school fees, rising costs of living, and how to provide for their families. Our farmers in some communities today live in fear due to insecurity, our traders struggle with instability, and our communities live with the pain of violence, fear, and poverty.

To you who feel overwhelmed, discouraged, and forgotten, I say to you: God sees you and knows your pain. He is not far from your struggles. Remember that the first Christmas was born in hardship. Mary and Joseph were poor, displaced, and without shelter. Yet it was precisely there, in that fragile and difficult moment, that God chose to dwell among us.

The angels proclaimed, “*Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to people of good will*” (Luke 2:14). This peace is not the absence of problems, but the presence of Christ in the midst of them. Jesus does not promise a life without suffering; He promises a heart strengthened by hope, a courage rooted in faith, as well as joy and peace that no hardship can steal.

Our nation is wounded by hunger, poverty, unemployment, corruption, insecurity etc, therefore, our message at this Christmas is a clarion call on all of us - leaders and citizens alike - to conversion of heart. Peace will not come through violence, greed or indifference. Peace begins when we recognize one another as brothers and sisters irrespective of tribe or religion, when we defend the dignity of every human life, and when we choose justice over selfish gains.

This Christmas period invites us to be instruments of God’s peace and joy. I urge families to rediscover love, forgiveness, and prayer in the home. I encourage everyone in whatever measure, little or much to share generously with those in difficult situations. Let us not allow hardship to harden our hearts. Instead, let it open our eyes to the suffering of others and let us offer joy and hope to them.

To our public leaders and those entrusted with authority, I appeal with the voice of the Church: place the common good above personal or regional interest. The cries of the poor, the unemployed, and the insecure must not go unheard. Those in IDP camps around the country are not just mere numbers but citizens of our country who are victims of a troubled nation. They need our care and comfort at this time. A nation cannot know peace when its people live

in fear and want. Those still in the den of kidnappers, await our common effort to rescue them and reunite them with their families. Those besieged by insurgency, look forward to restoration of peace in their communities. Therefore, let no effort be spared to ensure that they are rescued and the security of lives and properties of Nigerians is restored.

Dear brothers and sisters, Christmas assures us that darkness does not have the final word. Since the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it (John 1:5). Even now, Christ is born anew—in your patience, endurance, acts of kindness, and refusal to lose hope.

As we celebrate this sacred season, I invite you to place your worries, families, work, and our beloved country at the manger of the Child Jesus. Let us trust that the God who began this good work in us will bring it to fulfilment.

I pray that this Christmas will renew your strength, restore your joy, and fill your hearts with the peace that only Jesus Christ can give. May Jesus, the Prince of Peace, heal our wounded land, comfort the afflicted, and guide us towards a future of justice, unity, and hope. May Mary, the Mother of Jesus, visit our country, families and communities with peace and joy.

With fatherly love, I assure you of my prayers. May Almighty God bless you and your families, and may the joy of Christmas remain with you always.

Merry Christmas and a Peace-filled New Year 2026.

+ Most Rev. Peter Kayode Odetoyinbo
Bishop, Catholic Diocese of Abeokuta
24/12/25