

*“The people living in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned” (Mt. 4, 16).*

Dear brothers and sisters:

Despite the darkness of the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences, one more year we have the grace to prepare to live the Christmas Season. A Christmas that this year will have a very special character, given the difficult situation currently prevailing in our world.

For many it will be a time of nostalgia, of sadness at the impossibility of a festive and family celebration. But for us, who believe in the Love of God made flesh, these days will be marked by joy, because we know that the promise of a light capable of illuminating the darkness of the world has become a reality. And although it has yet to continue to illuminate and shine in the night of history, we know that Salvation has already taken place in God.

Christmas is always an invitation to deep and true joy, to hope capable of illuminating the darkness. And if that darkness is always present in one way or another, now we feel its weight more strongly. That is why the challenge that we all have is to become stars of Bethlehem, in light in the middle of the night, in support and hope for the men and women of our lands.

On the other hand, the change and the conditions to which we have been subjected have undoubtedly affected us. We, at CITEs, as you can imagine, have also been harshly conditioned, which has not prevented us that through other means and ways we continue trying to reach so many people, so many homes and communities that need this spiritual food through other means and channels. This has been and continues to be a challenge that invites us to grow in creativity, and also in austerity and trust in Providence.

The possibilities that the Internet has offered us have been surprising: We were able to continue offering a large part of our courses, including the Master's degree, online. During the summer it was possible to reopen the doors to on site activities, albeit conditioned by restrictions and fears. With a group of 20 experts in spirituality, accompaniment and psychology, we were able to create a worldwide network of spiritual accompaniment. And we were surprised by the international monitoring of the retreats and exercises, as well as the comments on the Word and the prayers... The celebration of the San Juan World Congress in September had a special resonance. It is true that many other activities have not been carried out, and that running such a large center is difficult. But thank God the providential help and the small income from the various activities that are helping us to stand firm have never been lacking.

And, while we share something of our life with you, we want to convey our fraternity to you on these special dates. We wish you a few days full of Peace and Hope in Bethlehem, and that the Child Jesus continues to strengthen you in your task, mission, and vocation.

Merry Christmas and a New Year 2021 full of the joy and love of Jesus.

Your CITEs brothers and sisters.