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## SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE OF RUILLE SUR LOIR

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Le Mans the 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016

Dear Friends,

The Advent season is progressing. For several weeks, in our European countries, the Christmas decorations are present everywhere in the streets and are telling us that it is time to think about presents and festive meals. But is that the only way we want to prepare Christmas? I am sure the answer is no, because for us Christians, the advent season is a time of conversion and renewal. We are called to go against the current of the commercialisation of Christmas.

Three great figures accompany us on our journey towards Christmas, Isaiah, John the Baptist and Mary. They announce the Good News of the coming of a Saviour, but they also dare to denounce injustice. They show us the path of conversion, the route leading us to the Light entering our World: Christ!

**... there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress.** *Isaiah 9,1*

The liturgy during this time invites us, day after day, to conversion. In a message for Christmas, Cardinal Danneels, writes: *Prepare your inner inn for the Lord, so that He is no longer obliged to seek shelter in a stable.*

We are more and more confronted with the fact that, all around the world, millions of people are driven away, thrown out... are living day and night on the streets.

For us, Christians and consecrated persons, Christmas is not only a feast celebrating the intimacy between us and God or a joyful gathering with family and friends. Christmas is a call to be a channel of peace, a builder of justice and a defender of the poor! God has chosen to come into the world as a vulnerable little child. Pope Francis' intention for December strikes me:

**Lord, see to all those children who are abducted, hurt and killed in armed conflicts, to those who are taken and transformed into child soldiers, robbed of their childhood.**

The Divine Child will choose, during his whole life, to be at the side of the poor, the sinners, the outcasts.

Another Advent message is that we are called to be watchmen and women as we are reminded by many Prophets. Being the watcher of our heart so that it will not become hard and indifferent to the solitude, poverty and fear of our brothers and sisters living in precariousness.

The Jews were waiting for a strong and rich Messiah, a King, but He came as a little new-born child lying in a manger, in no way different from all the newly-born throughout the world: little, defenceless, left to the care of the adults around Him. When God enters our world, our lives, He turns everything upside down: what is great becomes small and what is small becomes great.

In the Christmas liturgy, we sing: *O marvellous exchange! Man's Creator has become man, born of a virgin. We have been made sharers in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.*"

**For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...** This child brings closeness to all of us and makes us neighbours. This message fills our hearts with joy and hope! Yes, the Christmas message continues through the solidarity we see around us: a global solidarity when people are touched by natural disasters, a solidarity between neighbours to help a family of migrants arriving in an unknown country, solidarity between communities where there is need for help. These are signs of hope showing that the Christmas message is truly alive among us.

The first people visiting the Child were no celebrities nor renowned persons, they were shepherds, poor and of no importance, often seen as people one could not trust... But in the future this Child will become the

**Shepherd of the whole of humankind.**

Let us take time to pray, to meditate and to contemplate this great mystery of the Incarnation: *Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, which is to say that the Word of God has become a human word. The Incarnation is the « mystery of mysteries » because it reveals to us the deepest intimacy of God and his plan for humanity. (A Spirituality! A heritage! A way of life! p.42)*

The Lord is among us, Emmanuel, God with us, God one of us.

Let our hearts be united with the whole universe to sing this Song of Praise:

**Glory to God and peace on earth to those He loves!**

May Christmas, our patronal feast, fill our hearts with joy, *concerned for all those whom the Lord sends our way. Constitution n° 7*

*Merry Christmas*

*Sister Martine Meuwissen  
Superior General*