

## CHRISTMAS MESSAGES

I consider it my great pride and pleasure to wish my colleagues in the law profession a most blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year. I also wish to thank the Editors of the Lawyer's Journal for giving me this valuable opportunity to greet my fellow lawyers.

Now that we are in that season of the year most cherished by mankind for its spirit of selflessness and love, I wish to recall with you, my esteemed fellow lawyers, the role of the men of law in our country. Looking at the history of our country, from the beginning of our struggle for political freedom and independence, lawyers have always been at the helm of our destiny.

The mainstay of our democracy is the rule, not of force but of law. Not of the bullet but the ballot. Not of impulse but of reason. In the execution and interpretation of the rule of law, the government officials as well as the common citizen necessarily must look to the men in the law profession for guidance and direction. So, in a very real sense, we of the law profession are, in effect, the real custodians of democracy.

Vigilance, it was once said, is the price of liberty. It is up to us, the men of law, to keep the mainstream of our democracy healthy by constant and unabated vigilance over the civil liberties of our people.

On this joyous season of love and selfgiving, therefore, I would like to appeal to your patriotism and love of country. May I exhort each and everyone of you to be your own vigilance committee in safeguarding that precious essence of democracy, the legacy of our fathers and of the West: the supremacy of law over men. On your vigilance may very well hinge the future of our country.

EMMANUEL PELAEZ  
Vice-President of the Philippines

The message of Christmas—Peace to Men of Goodwill—has a particular significance for the Bench and the Bar.

There can be no possible peace without goodwill among men. No such goodwill is, however, conceivable without a minimum modicum of contentment, which cannot exist unless human rights and fundamental freedoms are recognized, as well as respected and observed.

Upon the other hand, the recognition of those rights and freedoms, and the respect and observance thereof must be promoted within the Rule of Law, for adherence thereto is a condition "sine qua non" to the very existence of every organized society and the same may not, without paving the way to its own dissolution, disregard the law, thereby jeopardizing the cause of peace, which is essential to the well-being of all.

Last, but not least, the Rule of Law cannot fully achieve its objectives without the earnest and full cooperation of the people. There must be a climate propitious to the effective operation of the law, which the Bench and the Bar may help create by settling disputes or solving legal problems in such a way as to impart the conviction that adherence to law and to its peaceful processes is the best means to promote the welfare of all, and that, to this end, there must be tolerance and understanding and we must guard ourselves against the evils of the passion, the prejudices, the hate and the bigotry that has brought so much sorrow to the world.

Every Christmas is thus a reminder to the Bench and the Bar that their main role in the context of society is that of peacemakers, which they are challenged to play to the best of their ability. In conveying my greetings and best wishes to my brethren in the judiciary and in the legal profession, I wish, also, to express the earnest hope that each one will meet the challenge fittingly.

ROBERTO CONCEPCION  
Associate Justice  
Supreme Court

In Christmas, the divine tidings is distilled into one word: Peace. So it has been since Nativity was heralded with the biblical message "Glory be to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of goodwill." Triteness could have detracted so much from the import of this expression. Yet the centuries through which it had been echoed and reechoed have not impaired its timeliness and validity. Today, as ever, true and lasting peace still is an elusive ideal and brotherhood among men a cherished dream.

It is, perhaps, little realized that we of the Bench and the Bar may also lend a hand to the attainment, limited though it is, of the noble aim—Peace. We are privy, by virtue of our office and profession, to the never ending contests in which parties vie for the advancement of their interests. Rivalries inevitably generate passion, if not animosity and ill-will, amongst the participants. So it is that the avoidance of occasions or misunderstandings and conflicts and the expeditious and just resolution of disputes—which are well within our capacity to achieve—are amongst the seeds from which peace and goodwill could be fostered. They are, indeed, the constant desideratum of our every effort and endeavor. Propitious is it now, the advent of the Yuletide season, for a rededication to this goal.

May the Spirit that pervades these Holidays abide with us all throughout the coming New Year.

CONRADO V. SANCHEZ  
Associate Justice  
Court of Appeals

Never in the history of our country do social problems make the life of an individual so difficult. And Christmas spirit undoubtedly becomes a sort of an oasis. In this spirit, we should turn our eyes towards our Creator for guidance and more or less permanent remedies. At least, during these days, let us forget our problems and enjoy the season.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all.

MARIANO NABLE  
Presiding Judge  
Court of Tax Appeals

Through the years, Christmas greetings and messages have become stereotyped... and commercialized. The message of Christmas is not any less valid or true because of these—but they have a tendency to be, and to sound, hollow, for the Spirit of the Christ is not in them. The greetings are said only because they are in vogue, in season—as substitutes for “hello” and “goodbye”; and the object of these greetings are conditioned to react accordingly.

For my part, I believe in the promise of Christmas—the promise that the coming of Christ was the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy at Eden: that even as God sent Man out of Paradise, He promised Man's redemption through Christ. I believe that the true spirit of Christmas cannot be, and is not, turned on at the start of the Season and shut-off at the end of the Year. I believe, instead, that Christmas time is the period during which to rekindle and to strengthen anew that spirit of Love, of Charity, of Hope, and of Joy, that comes from a genuine belief in Christ.

I believe, therefore, that Christmas is the time for the Brotherhood of the Bar to rededicate ourselves to our Oath: to seek, above all, Justice for every man; to champion always the cause of truth; and to see that the innocent shall not be condemned. And this is the time for those to whom we have entrusted the powers of government to remember and to ponder upon the old message from the Bible that Justice to be Just should be tempered with Mercy.

SALVADOR L. MARINO  
Secretary of Justice

As we usher in the Christmas Season this year we are reminded of the immortal message of the heavenly hosts in the night of the birth of Christ: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men” (Luke 2:14).

This should remind us that the goal of justice is peace and good will among men, for the attainment of which Christianity was founded, which goal we seek to achieve in the free world through peaceful settlement of individual or group disputes by bloodless legal combats in our courts. Indeed, the motto of the Philippine Department of Justice, as inscribed on its seal, is: *IUSTITIAE PAX OPVS* which, freely translated, means: “The Work of Justice is Peace.”

But the judicial process can end in peace and good will between litigants only if their disputes be ventilated before judges who are honest, capable, and dedicated to the search for truth in every litigation, assisted by ethical lawyers who present the cases of their clients capably and firmly, but with fairness and gentlemanliness towards adversaries and judges alike; bearing in mind always that decisions obtained through unethical practices and/or rendered by judges who were corrupted by political, financial, or other extraneous influences, cannot hope to create either peace in the minds of the losing parties, or respect in the hearts of the favored agents of judicial corruption.

With these in mind, my wish is that the coming Christmas bless all of us with the spirit of peace and good will, and the coming year shower both riches and honor on us all.

JESUS P. MORFE  
Executive Judge  
Manila Court of First Instance

It has often occurred to me that the coming of Christmas once a year is indeed a divine plan designed to fill a crying need in man's altogether mad pursuit for material well-being the rest of the year. Come Christmas we all suddenly remember to take stock of the fortunes that the Little Child came all the way down to earth to teach us, by exalted word and sublime deed, to live by. Suddenly we pause from the break-neck speed of worldly chores to evaluate, to make inventory, and perhaps to hurriedly enter last-minute corrective and very often exculpatory adjustments before closing the balance sheet of our year's book of deeds. We pause to ask ourselves these questions: What have we contributed towards making our homes happier, our communities safer and gladder, the world freer?

Christmas underscores for us the truth that man does not live by bread alone. And in this age of bitter ideological strife thanks to which the world is jolted into the realization that there is, indeed, nothing more precious than human freedom from intellectual, moral and social bondage, Christmas should come as a welcome day of truce for all men and women of good will—a day dedicated to an examination in retrospect of those opportunities they let go which could have been so easily and so effortlessly employed to right a wrong, to gladden a sad heart, to lessen another's burden, to promote a worthy cause, to help eradicate an evil. And in so doing, look forward in anticipation to accomplishing in the coming year that which was left undone this and the past years, to resolving that the coming year will be as fruitful in spiritual wealth as all of us so carefully resolve to make in material riches.

To the readers of the *Lawyers' Journal* in particular, I wish to extend the prayer and the hope that in the coming year you will not by-pass any chance that the profession will surely afford you to contribute your share towards humanizing the law and the legal practices with the end in view of attaining, at least in your very own spheres of contacts and influence, a truly free, just and compassionate world. So that come next Christmas, when once again you linger awhile on matters not of this rude earth and look over your Book of Life you may, like the Angel that wrote thereon, enter a satisfactory judgment.

May the Child Jesus bless you and all of your loved ones, and may His guiding hand be with you in all your enterprises throughout the coming year.

LOURDES P. SAN DIEGO  
Judge  
Court of First Instance  
Quezon City Branch

My message to the lawyers is this:

The lawyers' duty is not to prove the guilty innocent but to help the Court arrive at the truth. A true lawyer is one who places truth and service in the first place and the emoluments of the profession in the second place only. That is, Service, Truth and Justice above all.

But, Justice and Wisdom without Fortitude are useless.

JOSE S. BAUTISTA  
Presiding Judge  
Court of Industrial Relations