



Christmas 2020

Dear companions in the Lord

This time last year, in what both you and I thought would be my final Christmas letter to you as General Superior, I began with a quotation from the prophet Isaiah, the prophet who has accompanied us during much of our Advent waiting time in the past weeks. In verse 2 of Chapter 9, Isaiah speaks about the people who have “walked in darkness”. It would be fair to say that all of us who inhabit our “common home” have been walking in darkness during the past year. It has been a darkness caused by a pandemic that has taken life from many, physical and mental health from many more and employment and financial security from millions. We cannot and should not deny that. On the other hand, however, whilst “walking in darkness”, the “darkness” of 2020, we have also seen shafts of light and have received gifts. These gifts, like the gifts brought by the Magi on their journey, have perhaps been unexpected ones and not necessarily gifts of which we thought we were in need. It is a paradox that these men, who probably also did much of their travelling during the hours of darkness, brought gifts that, at first sight, were not what one would expect for a new born child – costly gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. In praying and reflecting on this, I found my way to what I wanted to share with you this Christmas. I want to share some of the gifts – costly gifts – that the CJ is bringing to our newly born Saviour this Christmas, gifts gathered on the journey through 2020:

First the **gold of service:**



This photograph shows our sisters in Brazil sewing masks in the early days of the pandemic.

This photograph shows two of our sisters in Slovakia in full protective equipment because they participated in the mass testing programme in that country in the month of November.



Second, the frankincense of prayer:



This photograph shows the Daejeon community in Korea praying in their chapel for all those affected by the pandemic.

This photograph shows novices and candidates in Patna praying for the same intention.



Third, the myrrh of suffering:



This photograph shows a long queue of people in the city of Delhi, waiting patiently to receive food that will enable them and their families to eat for a few days.

This photograph shows the few members of the Italian Province permitted to attend her funeral, gathered around the coffin of Sister Maurizia RIP who died from Covid-19.



I invite you to contemplate all those photographs, and the gifts that they represent, and to give some time to pondering the gift or gifts you would like to bring to our new-born Saviour this Christmas – gifts that reflect the very particular year through which we have all lived. Your service, your prayer, your suffering during this year – I invite each one to bring them to Him and offer them to Him.

And my gift to each of you, with which I end this unusual letter in this unusual year, is one final photograph, an image of the gift of hope, the gift for which we are surely all asking this Christmas and for the coming year:

This is Tinashe Emmanuel. Tinashe has the same meaning as Emmanuel. It means, “God is with us” in the Shona language of Zimbabwe. Tinashe was abandoned in the first days of his life, only a few weeks ago, and brought to our children’s home in Amaveni. Thanks to our sisters, he will be loved and cared for and given hope as he grows up. My prayer is that Tinashe Emmanuel will be a sign to each of you of the hope that the birth of Our Lord brings to us and to our world each year, the hope that brings light, however dark the journey. Jesus say Amen.



As always, this letter comes with my love and prayer for each one of you. May Jesus, the bringer of hope, continue to have us all in His keeping.

Jane

Jane CJ