



Your Excellency, Dear Confreres and Consoeurs,

Our history does not expect an uncertain future that fills us with concern, but awaits the coming of Christ which will fill us with hope. To wait for the Lord we will need to be active, but not idle, we will need to be holy, but not depraved, we will need to be willing, but not enclosed in our own selfishness and self- sufficiency.

We shall not wait in vain but have in mind the memory of the One who arrived during the mystery of Christmas we now prepare to celebrate, and the certainty of the presence of Christ who walks beside us and tells us that "Our redemption is drawing near" (Luke, 21, 28).

The coming of Christ is always imminent and it requires our continuous vigilance and as well as a cheerful disposition. Now is the time to rise above selfishness and laziness and not to expect anything from our own imagination, but to expect someone completely new: Jesus Christ, The Hope of the world.

If the Lord arrives, we are called out to meet him. Advent is a very proper liturgical season to awaken in us Christians the conscience of our missionary responsibility.

Faced with the certainty of having to stand before the Lord, who will judge us in His love, we can not live a frantic and banal life, made up of the dissipation that distracts us, the evasions that alienate us, sterile actions and useless discussions. We are called to overcome coldness, compromise and indecision.

There is still justice to be found, sick to be healed, poor to be relieved. We are called to leave our world in a better condition than that in which we found it.

This Advent we are called to unite in prayer for our brothers and sisters in Faith that live in the Muslim regions of Iraq, Syria, Indonesia and Africa, and are discriminated against, forbidden to pray, persecuted, executed or forced to flee a life of terror, their churches burned, their towns destroyed, their human rights deprived, dispossessed, and all with the indifference of governments and civil authorities in Europe.

May the Lord who today arrives and the Son of Man who will return at the end of time help us see everything from their ultimate goal, and give us the strength to be vigilant in waiting and assiduous in prayer, workers in charity, to be ready every day to repent and to be witnesses of the Good News of God's love for all.

Monreale November 30, 2014

Michele Pennisi
Archbishop of Monreale,
Ecclesiastical Grand Prior of the Sacred Military Hospitaller Order of Saint Lazarus