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Dearest Brothers,

Peace of Christ be with you!

This Season of Advent, that leads us to the celebration of Christmas, is filled with many expectations which we call HOPE. Indeed, this is what we need right now. As a people of HOPE, we live the present life with lots of goals and visions brought by our faith. I wish to greet all of you a blessed season of Advent as we wait for the coming of the Lord. The words of the Scriptures and the liturgy of this season points us to hope and to be joyful for the coming of the Lord is within our reach. We can see and feel His presence not only through beautiful decorations, but through the words of the Scriptures that reveal to us the coming of the Son of Man.

There is an enemy of hope, despair. This occurs when we see things in a futile way and with a bleak end and become blinded to what has been promised to us. Despair occurs when we try to be like the first disciples who lived in fear and did not see the light in the midst of the darkness and when we stop to believe and put everything under our capacity, expectations, and money. Sometimes we focus too much on doom and gloom. We eventually become prophets for our kingdom in place of God's kingdom. Sometimes we speak from our own strength and experience of life, and not according to our experience of God. The Kingdom of God is so visible in the actual churches we build, but it is even profoundly present in the gathering of the assembly of the people of God. Our communities become locus of the Spirit, although imperfect. Our communities are composed of many human frailties, but nevertheless, the Spirit gathers where He can breathe His tongues of fire so that we may set the world on fire with the power of God. This is the fire that does not consume and diminish but the fire that purifies and enlightens our life. This is a light that comes from that fire and an inspiration of the Spirit to move forward.

I wish to express my closeness to our brothers and sisters in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The present political and peace situation is not good. There is again, as it has been, war and turmoil in this nation. I wish to express my encouraging words with those of what Christ said before the liturgical year ended. Never fret, never be discouraged, never lose hope, and never be swayed by other inspirations but embrace those of Christ. All these wars, insurrections and calamities of life must unfold, because in the midst of this the Lord will come and save us.



"Let us hold unswervingly to the hope
we profess for he who promised is faithful."

Hebrews 10:23

The Emmanuel, who is with us, saves. He saves us through this way of life and even in situations like this. Let us lift up our eyes, as our psalm and antiphons encourage us to do these days, because the God of all power is coming to save, and He fulfills us. Brothers, courage! The power of violence and fear has no more power over us. Hold fast to the goodness of God. Hold fast to what we believe and hold fast to what God promises, for He reveals that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

I want you to know that I pray for you every day in our chapel in the Casa Generalizia. We specially offer our prayers for your well-being and safety. I think of you and pray for you especially during this most challenging time. Offer your heart and life to God. The power of the world is about to be conquered, believe these words, and believe in Him and what He promises and desires for us. The future is filled with hope.

This Christmas, I promise that my Mass will be offered for each one of you and ask the God of Hope to help us gaze on the beauty of the earth. I pray to the Blessed Lord who will come to us to bless us with that same pure spirit of humility. I pray that we may overcome our own darkness of hatred, hurts and division and we may win the war against violence so as to be agents of positivity. I pray that we may become less materialistic and grow more spiritually so we can see the need of our own personal and communitarian conversion. I pray that this Christmas we may increase our love of God and we may love others, especially those who may seem very difficult to love. I pray that we may truly foster the gift of listening to one another by means of a healthy dialogue, rather than the war of words and assumptions. I pray for you, each one of you, so dear in the eyes of God, to be the image of God that He created us to be. I hope for you, for me and for the rest of our religious Family. Let us pray for one another and bless each other with the greetings and kiss of peace!

Joy to the world the Lord has come!

Father Ted