

**25/12/17**

**Peace, Goodwill, and Love**

**By Dr. the Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves**

**Prime Minister**

For quite some time now there has been a growing trend, world-wide, towards the commercialisation of Christmas; St. Vincent and the Grenadines, too, has not escaped this distortion of the true meaning of Christmas. To be sure, the season of joy and love prompts merry-making, feasting, and the sharing of love through acts of giving and selfless generosity. Much of all this is admirable, but too often we go overboard. Feasting does not require gluttony; merry-making ought not to induce drunkenness and desolate conduct; and the sharing of love does not demand expensive gifts which engender unaffordable debts. In short, we ought to be measured and balanced in what we do or say, always bearing in mind that Christmas is about the symbolic commemoration of the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Another deplorable trend of many, is to turn Christmas into another carnival, but in December rather than in June-July. Still, as worrying, are the efforts of many frustrated politicians to use, misuse, and abuse Christmas as another battleground occasion for partisan politics amidst all its unwelcome divisiveness, bitterness, and intolerance. More than ever, at Christmas 2017, we ought thus to heed the sage advice of Psalm 146 verses 3-4: *“Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing.”*

At Christmas 2017, our guiding standard, indeed our quest, ought to be to do justly, to love mercy (goodness), and to walk humbly with our God. We may fail in our quest but we must try and try again ceaselessly until we arrive at that satisfying and fulfilling stage.

We cannot share true love at Christmas unless we are mindful, in practical ways, of the condition of the poor and less fortunate among us; we cannot share love if we are joyful of bad news for others, if we exhibit bad-mindedness, or welcome ill for our country. The Book of Proverbs [Chapter 17 verse 5] is instructive in this regard: *“He who mocks the poor shows contempt for the Maker; whoever gloats over disaster will not go unpunished.”*

I have been praying for peace and good-neighborliness in our land; others have been doing so, too. I urge that we settle our differences or conflicts in a civil way; there is absolutely no need for personal or group violence; we must exercise restraint and control over our worst impulses to violence. And, on the roads, let us be considerate to other road users. Please remember that a motor vehicle or motor cycle in negligent, reckless or drunken hands is a dangerous weapon, a destructive force.

More and more, amidst all our difficulties and challenges, I see progress and hope. In this respect I speak not only of the remarkable efforts by the government and allied institutions to do better in helping to uplift our people, but also of the phenomenal efforts of many

churches, civic organisations, and community groups in making Christmas and our lives more meaningful, more joyous, more loving, more caring and sharing.

On Christmas Day 2017, if any of us finds a dark place in his or her life, there is hope because there is Christ to light the way, for He is with you and me. The esteemed American evangelist, Max Lucado, reminds us aptly that:

*“When God chose to reveal himself, he did so through a human body. The hand that touched the leper had dirt under its nails. The feet upon which the woman wept were calloused and dusty. And his tears — they came from a heart as broken as yours or mine ever has been.”*

So, at Christmas 2017, we must like the shepherds GO and SEE goodness and mercy, grace and love, peace and justice, and God’s great works. In the Book of Luke [Chapter 2, verses 15-16) it is written:

*“So it was, when the angels had gone away from them into heaven, that the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let us now go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has come to pass, which the Lord has made known to us.’ And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.”*

So, wherever you or I may be on Christmas Day 2017, metaphorically, we must GO and SEE!

Have a wonderful, uplifting, and blessed Christmas 2017 and a productive New Year!