

THE DIOCESE OF THE WINDWARD ISLANDS

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The Rt. Rev'd C. Leopold Friday, B.A., M.A.

Bishop's Christmas Message 2018

The story is told of a young woman who had an unhealthy relationship with her children's father, he was one known to be a rum drinker, and anytime he came into her presence she would experience nausea, and she would vomit. This caused the relationship to grow worse for she constantly asked him to stay away from her because she could not take the smell of alcohol. Interestingly, she had a cousin who came to spend a few weeks with her and he was also a rum drinker. However, in his presence she was never sick nauseous or unwell. As she looked at the woman in the mirror she realized that it was not the smell of the alcohol but the issues surrounding the unhealthy relationship which were upsetting her.

Every year we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We ensure that our homes are clean, for some there are new curtains, furniture, carpets, refrigerator, and stove and the house has been repainted. Then there is the Christmas tree, decorations and lights. Sorrell and ginger beer, ham, fruit and black cakes and the list goes on. There is "Nine Mornings" (in St. Vincent and the Grenadines), Novena, midnight mass, or early on Christmas morn, families having meals together and the giving and receiving of gifts and providing meals and other forms of assistance to the poor and destitute.

In the gospel according to Matthew 11:16-19 Jesus is quoted as saying:

'But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the market-places and calling to one another,

"We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn."

For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He has a demon"; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds.' (Matthew 11: 16-19)

The Christmas message speaks to us of a gracious and loving God who cares for us human beings and all of creation, and who desires that we live together in Community. As we reflect on the harsh realities of life let us consider how as human beings we allow our self-satisfied prejudices, egos and self-interest to blind our vision causing us to see things that are none existent, and to develop plans and strategies in response to them which are futile, and at times quite harmful and destructive. It was John Moore who said "Your opinion is your opinion, your perception is your perception--do not confuse them with "facts" or "truth". Wars have been fought and millions have been killed because of the inability of men to understand the idea that EVERYBODY has a different viewpoint."

Like the woman in the story at the beginning of this message, may we this Christmas look at the man and woman in the mirror, as the case may be, and see and hear the truth as presented to us in the Christmas message. May "almighty God pour upon us the new light of His incarnate Word: And grant that this light enkindled in our hearts, may shine forth in our lives."

"Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. ¹⁹Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly.

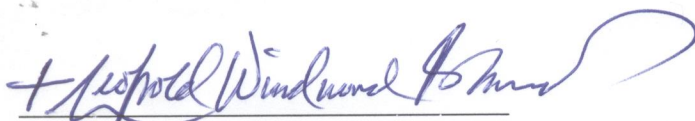
²⁰But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. ²¹She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.'

(Matthew 1:18-20)

On behalf of my wife Lois and three daughters, Marcella, Malaika and Mikayla, I take this opportunity to wish you all a Blessed and Glorious Christmas and a Happy and Peaceful New Year.

With every good wish and God's blessings

Your friend and Bishop

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "The Rt. Rev'd C. Leopold Friday". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

The Rt. Rev'd C. Leopold Friday
Bishop of the Windward Islands