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## 2013 LWF Christmas Message

**From LWF President Bishop Dr Munib A. Younan**

*For a child has been born for us,  
a son given to us;  
authority rests upon his shoulders;  
and he is named  
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
(Isaiah 9:6)*

Dear sisters and brothers in the Lutheran communion around the world,

I send you my love from Jerusalem and I pray that the Babe who was laid in a manger in Bethlehem may be born daily into our hearts.

As the LWF's delegation to His Holiness Pope Francis presented the gift of a tea kettle used by Somali refugees in Dadaab camp, Kenya, this past October, the Pope excitedly called for an ecumenism of martyrdom, an ecumenism of common witness that shares the joy and peace of Christmas in our fragmented world. This is a challenge not only to us, but to the entire Christian community, to share this witness throughout the world and through our unity as Christ's children. Our common witness will only be strengthened if we recognize the faithfulness of the Gospel and the image of Christ in each believer and every human being.

What did the people in exile think when they heard the message of Isaiah, a message filled with promise and redemption? Isaiah and all the prophets who responded to the challenges of exile carried with them a common witness of salvation to a people in mourning, a people who had been through great difficulties. This common witness breathed hope and joy to the hearts of the exiled people.

Today, let us carry this very same message of salvation and liberation for people yearning for wholeness and human dignity, for people struggling for freedom of religion, for nations seeking economic and gender justice. Let us share this message to all who are oppressed, living in poverty, those who live as migrants and refugees, hopeless, displaced, or occupied.

Christmas is a time for remembering God's past faithfulness and recognizing our collective yearning for God's continued work of justice and wholeness in the world. Can this Christmas be a renewed call to our communion for an ecumenism of witness to God's continued faithful promise to us?

I pray this Christmas renew our commitment to a common witness that transforms hatred to love, oppression to freedom, war to peace, animosity to reconciliation, mistrust to trust. Christmas will only have meaning if our common witness will offer Jesus a manger to be born into. The promised child has come to save us and he continues to bring this redemption to us. It is this Christmas that binds us together in the true hope of Christ that does not disappoint. For a child has been born to us.

And as we remember the Prince of Peace who found his way into the world in Bethlehem, we ask that you pray for the peace of Jerusalem, a city that is mere kilometers away from where our Savior laid his head.

Merry Christmas and God's blessings to you for a new year!

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a plus sign followed by the lowercase letters 'ila.' and a long horizontal stroke ending in a small hook.