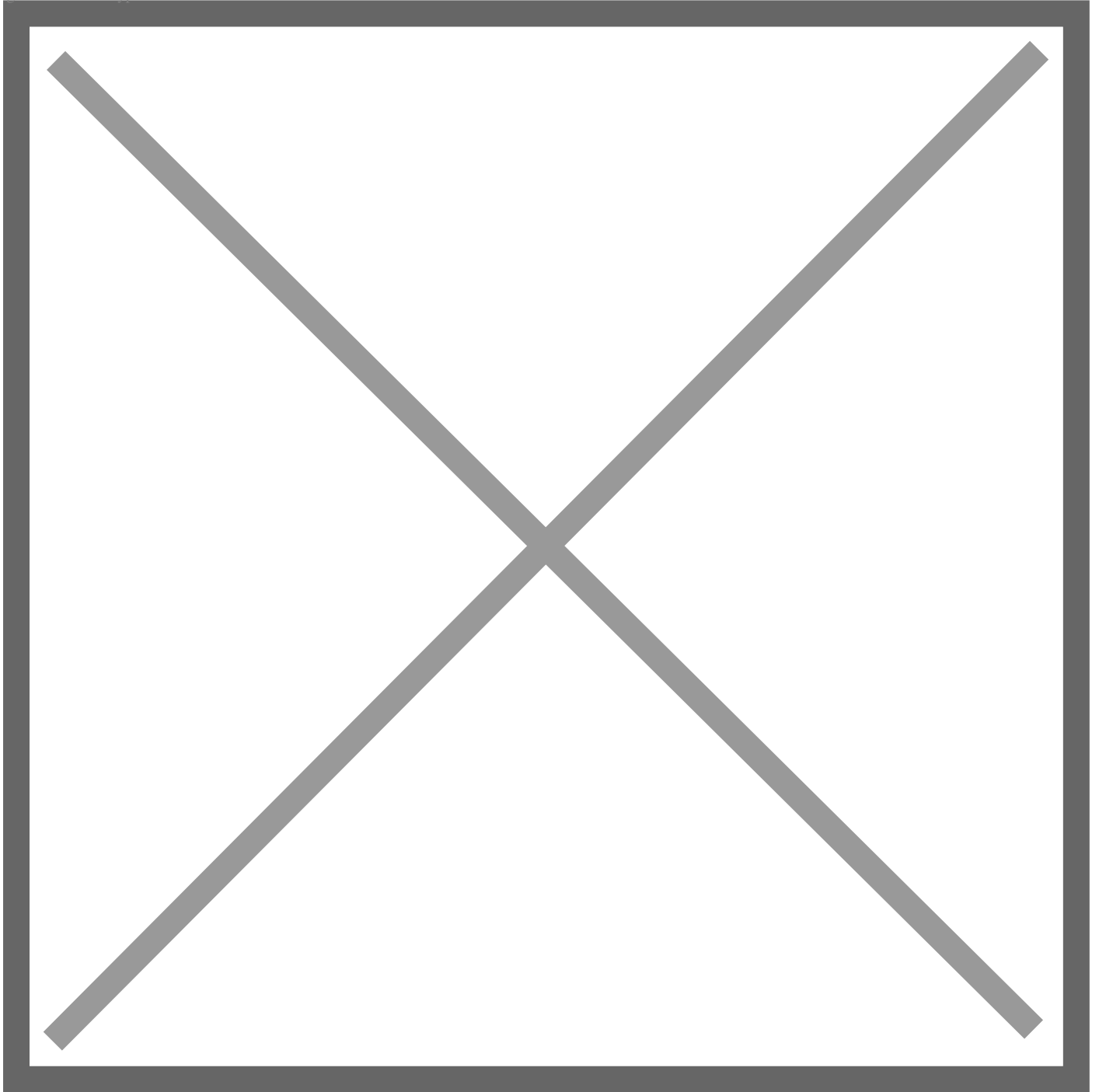


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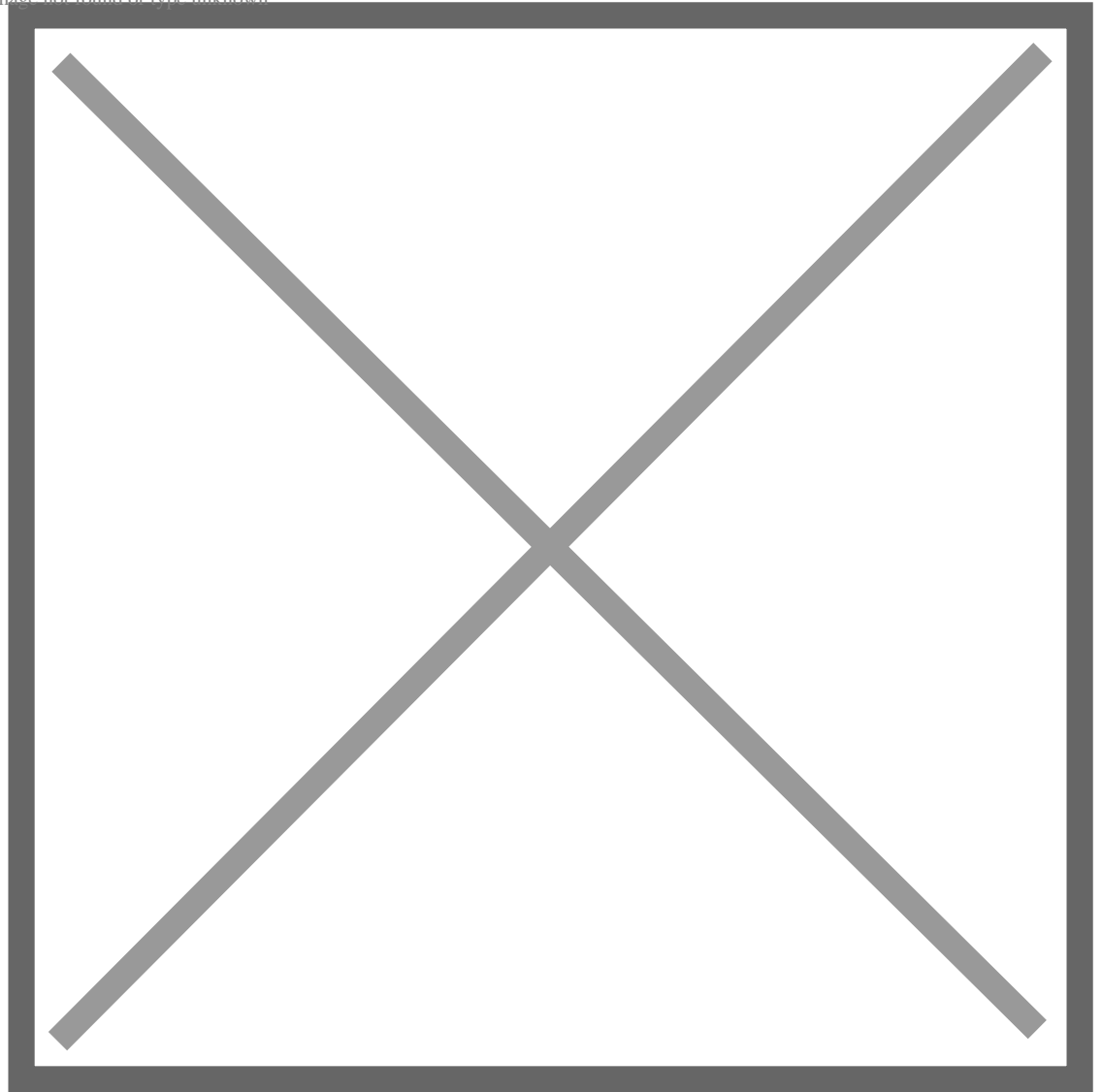
Christmas message from cardinal Pizzaballa

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**Pierbattista
Pizzaballa***

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Dear brothers and sisters,

The Lord gives you peace! And above all, Merry Christmas!

This year, as we know, we are celebrating Christmas as normally as possible, especially in Bethlehem, but not only! It is nice to see in all our parishes and communities the Christmas tree and the Nativity, and all that we typically have for Christmas celebrations, and we are happy about this! We know that all the problems, whether political, social, economic, spiritual, etc.... are still on the table, but it is important also to have this break from all the pain and to enjoy Christmas, especially for our children, for our families, for our poor, and to share this among all of us. Indeed, we had a very difficult year, and the upcoming year will also be very challenging.

But as we did in the past, also for the future, we can assure you that we will be present,

we will continue to serve our community and we will continue to be in our community altogether as one community the light of Jesus Christ, to bring consolation, comfort, support and solidarity wherever it is necessary. And then of course we also want to be a voice of truth, to call for justice, and to call for respect for human rights and the dignity of the person. Because this is what we celebrate in Christmas, we celebrate the Word becoming flesh, we celebrate the Incarnation which is something real and concrete: Our faith should always meet and touch the reality of our lives, personally and on a communal level.

But Christmas also reminds all of us of an important thing. Especially in this period where violence and hatred are the common language. In a context where it is common to think if one does not use strength, one would not be taken into consideration, hence, violence, strength and hatred seem to be the common refrain, unfortunately; if you are not strong if you do not raise your voice it is as if you don't exist. The Christmas message is different, it reminds us of the Christian way, God enters in our history and our nights, but enters as a newborn child, which is the most fragile element we know, but Christmas reminds us also of how is the Christian way to live, especially in this context as I said. God, through Jesus Christ, enters in our history, enters in our nights in the reality of the most fragile element we know, a newborn child, who is very fragile, in need of everything, dependent on everything, and very weak. Yet, this is the way he enters the world. But this Newborn Child, which is very weak from a human point of view, changed the world, and all the nations and humanity are attracted by him. A newborn child awakes in everyone tenderness and love, and this is what we need especially in our time, and we will continue to be as Christians a place of care, tenderness, and love, without limitations without borders; love without borders; this is what we need right now.

And there is hope, because I have seen in all our communities and also outside of our communities a lot of people who are able to be this light that we need, so in all these physical lights that we are seeing in Christmas, we have to also see the lights of many people and communities which is visible through their lives and their testimony, so we have to continue to be this luminous presence wherever we are.

Merry Christmas! God Bless! Awaiting to see all of you in Bethlehem for the Celebrations. And if you cannot come, let us be united in prayer, and we pray for all our brothers and sisters from all over the world. Do not be afraid to come visit us here, we are waiting for you, without you, Christmas here is not complete!

**** Patriarch of Jerusalem***