



BUNDESPRÄSIDENTIALAMT

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**Christmas message
from Federal President Joachim Gauck,
25 December 2014
in Schloss Bellevue**

Good evening from Bellevue Residence. I wish each and every one of you, wherever you may be watching, a merry Christmas!

In this festive season, we exchange gifts and with our good wishes and our visits, we show that we belong together – as family, as friends and as neighbours. We need these ties, for we experience happiness and fulfilment when we give others those things we ourselves hope for: attention, closeness and care.

Fellow citizens,

We find ourselves at the end of a year which has given us much to be happy about: Germany has more jobs than ever before, the country has a better image abroad than ever, and we even won the soccer World Cup. At the same time, we look back on a turbulent year of war, civil war, terrorism and murder, even in the name of religion. Hardly a day passes without news of people being killed. We are confronted with the suffering of countless homeless and displaced persons.

This year, in these circumstances, the Christmas message “Peace on earth!” sounds especially urgent. For we sense that no peace can be taken for granted. Every peace, yes, even that which allows us to live here in freedom and happiness, is precious.

Today our country is a country of peace. For this reason, wherever we can help to preserve or bring peace, to ease suffering and to build a better future, we should do everything in our power to do so. Our culture and our democracy stand against conflict, hatred and deadly violence.

A humane society needs its citizens to respect each other and to heed each other, day in day out. Only in this way can there be peaceful

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coexistence. All religions share this commitment; it binds and obligates us all.

One clear expression of humanity in our society is, I believe, the great willingness there now is to take in refugees. Just a few days ago I visited an association in Magdeburg which looks after young parentless refugees stranded in Germany. For me the fact that we respond with empathy to the suffering around us, that the vast majority of us do not share the views of those who want to seal Germany off, is a truly encouraging lesson learnt this year.

Encouragement – that is the second message of Christmas. This message too was heard long ago across the fields of Bethlehem: “Fear not!” The God who appeared to the world as a little child, he seeks to remove all our fears.

“Fear not!” This is what I would like to tell all those who are worried by developments in the world, who are anxious that we do not have answers yet to many of our questions.

Taking fears seriously does not mean giving in to them. If our eyes are wide with fear we will find it hard to discover solutions; we are more likely to make ourselves look small and disheartened. We should regard the message “Fear not!” as an encouragement to put trust in our values, our strengths and – indeed – in our democracy. And surely we know: those who face up to challenges will also find solutions. Now in particular, 25 years after the peaceful revolution, we remember that circumstances can be changed for the better.

We know that fears will always accompany us. However, we also know that putting into practice what we call humanity is in fact the greatest calling on humankind.

We see this over and over again. I am thinking of the countless people who are taking care of their fellow human beings even on this day, in their neighbourhood, in hospitals or in homes for the elderly. I am also thinking of the people working in those parts of Africa where the Ebola virus has struck. Of development workers, soldiers and doctors – of all those fellow citizens who are making this world and our country a better place.

Each and every one of us can help to maintain the thermal flow, the warmth within society without which the world would be a cold and peaceless place. We shall act when human beings need our help. We shall offer peace to those who are in danger and protection to those who are being persecuted.

The message of Christmas can give us the courage to do so.

On this note I wish you all a blessed and happy Christmas.