

**MESSAGE FROM THE MOST HON.
PORTIA SIMPSON MILLER, ON, MP
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
CHRISTMAS 2009**

My fellow Jamaicans,

I address you today with mixed emotions – sensing the need to celebrate the Good News of what this Christmas season means to so many of us, but cognizant of the undue pressure that has been brought to bear on the people of this great country.

The Season ought to be one of sharing, caring and the giving of our resources to improve the quality of life for all Jamaicans, especially the poorest among us.

It was our own National Hero, the Right Excellent Marcus Mosiah Garvey, who reminded us that “the Child Jesus was sent into this world to teach us the new life, the Life of Love, of Charity, the Life of Mercy”.

These words will perhaps echo with inspired truthfulness this Christmas more than at any other time.

The festivities and activities which have grown over the years to characterize Christmas have been forcibly placed on the backburners of our personal economies.

This Christmas, more than any other, we must indeed elevate peace, goodwill and mercy.

The very first sounds of Christmas and one of its most abiding themes is captured in the Carol, “***Joy to the world the Lord has come!***” Christmas is traditionally associated with happiness and kindness; with goodwill and the spirit of generosity.

Despite the overarching economic challenges which face us nationally and individually, I am constrained, in the spirit of Christmas, to speak with you of lovely things.

Personally, this is a painful Christmas message for me to present.

I struggled seriously and agonized deeply about what to say to you, because I know that many of you are suffering.

I can feel the fear, trepidation and anxieties about the New Year and the challenges that it will bring.

However, I take hope in the indomitable spirit of survival and the resilient unconquerable nature of our people.

We may bend but we must never break and we most certainly will never, **and must never**, give up.

The Hebrew phrase “*Jehovah-jireh*” as recorded in Genesis 22:14 and which means “*God has seen; God will provide*” is so relevant for us at this time.

It was God’s response to Abraham’s desperation; and it means that when human beings have reached their breaking point, God often uses that as a turning point of provision in their lives.

When it seems that all hope is gone and we have hit our lowest point, the Lord of Christmas speaks quietly to our hearts: **“*Jehovah-jireh!*”**

I am certain that there are many of you for whom these words may seem hollow when you recognize the severity of the challenges facing your families.

But let us reason for a moment. Isn’t Christmas all about hope?

Doesn’t it say to us, that when we feel lost and frustrated, when it seems that all hope is gone; we can be confident that God still cares and that God provides?

So today, I am not afraid to speak HOPE to you.

I speak it with sincerity, because MY HOPE in you and for you is embedded in our history of triumph over adversities; My HOPE in you and for you is a HOPE that is grounded upon my abiding faith in the Jamaican people to rise above the hardships of life.

My hope for you and in you is that we will strengthen our bonds of nationhood and of nationalism.

And so, as I have asked in the past, Let this Christmas be a time of peace and goodwill to all.

I implore you to refrain from any word and deed which may foster anger and hatred and result in violence and strife.

Let us instead embrace generosity, mercy, warmth and a charitable spirit.

I ask that you give love and togetherness instead of the gifts and toys that you might not be able to purchase at this time.

Let us take the time to show our children that we care; this Christmas season, let us put back the sparkle into the eyes of our children.

The elderly, the shut-ins and persons with disabilities need to feel our hands of care and hear our voice of cheer during this Season.

I implore you, draw your family close to you and let them feel your love. Reach out to your less-fortunate neighbours, relatives and friends and let them know that you care.

We are a people renowned for our hospitality, let us resist the temptation of selfishness and instead, let us extend the hand of kindness, all over this Jamaica Land we love.

Let us give a helping hand, and show our neighbours that we understand; light faith's gleaming candle for the ones who grope through the shadows. Sweeten dreary days for the lost and lonely.

To my fellow Jamaicans at home and in the Diaspora, I wish for you a Christmas filled with the gift of love, laughter and goodwill.

Have yourselves a peaceful Christmas and may God bless you all.