

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

"Rekindling, Family, Love & Hope"

My fellow Jamaicans:

As we approach the end of a year of varying challenges, difficulties and triumphs, it is time once again to celebrate Christmas. We can all agree that we are a blessed people and for that we are thankful. We are thankful that:

- ⊙ We were spared the fury of a Hurricane this past season;
- ⊙ We were able to celebrate the phenomenal success of our athletes at the World Athletics Championship in Berlin;
- ⊙ We have taken measures to protect our children through the establishment of initiatives such as the *Ananda Alert System*;
- ⊙ In the Diaspora, young Jamaicans have excelled with their development of an ingenious device that assists the disabled to walk. It ranked 18th of 50 worldwide inventions for 2009!

There are no doubt, many other significant achievements too numerous to mention here.

This is my first Christmas message to the nation since being appointed Governor-General in February. It comes at a time when the world is in turmoil, and is somewhat unstable socially and economically. As a result of that, we in Jamaica are currently experiencing a difficult period, but we *will not, cannot, and must not* lose hope, or sink into gloom and despair. History has shown that some of the greatest nations of the world have gone through dark and difficult periods, but they did not give up. Through unrest and depression, they clung to hope, and today they have robust economies and strong societies.

We can learn from their experience and also from the oyster which thrives when irritated. The greater the irritation, the more beautiful the pearl it produces. This is the time when we have to dig, yet deeper, into our resources and our potential, so that we can quickly emerge from this difficult period. We face daunting social and economic challenges, but they are not in-surmountable. We Jamaicans are a resilient people, and we will persevere and come through this experience as pure gold. *I believe that!*

In the midst of this uncertainty comes another Christmas, a time of peace, goodwill, love, fellowship and happiness. This Christmas we are encouraged to reflect, introspect, recognize the reason for the season, and make some time for our families and friends. Some of us no doubt will be thinking about the loved ones we have lost, whether by natural or violent causes.

Many of you, for various reasons, will be unable to spend Christmas with families. It could be that you are working; providing vital public or emergency services; or because your family is abroad. I encourage you to create a family setting to include those around you. Families form the basis of society and if our families are okay, the society will also be okay.

This past year, we have witnessed unprecedented attacks on the family and this has unfortunately manifested itself in the neglect of children and their exposure to various forms of negative habits and behaviours. These occurrences have contributed to the widespread deviation from normal social behaviour, which ultimately threatens their growth and development.

Together we have to work in our communities to develop families in which our children can be nurtured and socialized to play their part as good citizens of Jamaica. This is not the time for people to *'mind their own business'* and ignore the youth. We have to **look after each other, protect our children and be the village that raises the child.** The upsurge in crime and violence can only be reversed if we cultivate and nurture the core values that encourage each person to be a good neighbour. We need also, to channel our thoughts and energies in a positive way.

I believe that with love and hope, we can realize our goals at the personal and national level. Let us rekindle the spirit of goodwill for the family and the entire nation, and build a foundation of peace and love to last us into the New Year. As one writer says, *'Faith makes all things possible, hope makes all things work, and love makes all things beautiful.'*

Now is the time to rest, relax, enjoy your families, and strengthen yourselves to continue the journey ahead.

I wish for each of you, a joyful Holiday Season filled with peace, love and good cheer.

From my family to yours, **Happy Christmas!** God bless you, and God bless Jamaica.

Patrick Allen
Governor-General