

»We refuse to be enemies«



**Message for Christmas 2023
by Bishop Harald Rückert**

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

During the past weeks, time and again I had to think of the meeting with Daoud Nassar. Together with his family he runs a farming project southwest of Bethlehem. At the entry of the property, which is surrounded by Jewish settlements and ever higher growing barriers, and many difficulties they have to cope with, lies a stone, proclaiming the guiding principle of this Christian Palestinian family: **»We refuse to be enemies.«** An incredible testimony!

In the way they live their lives it becomes clear, that one can resist injustice in a creative manner, openly and without violence. His answer to my question, where they find the strength and energy for this path of peace, a thoughtful smile whisks across his face. "In faith, through our faith in Jesus Christ!" This testimony of peace moves me.

In the direct vicinity of the location of the Nasser family, Jesus Christ was born 2000 years ago. In Bethlehem. God personally was born into this world. That changes everything! Suffering and death, horrors and violence shall not have the final say. Far more, God's Shalom – his all-encompassing peace – shall permeate everything and heal us humans and all of creation! That is why the angels proclaim in that holy night:

*Do not be afraid! Today a saviour has been born to you.
Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace.*

Luke 2:10.11.14

The peace of God has ascended over our earth.
This peace shall transform everything.
That is, what I believe.
That is, what I hope for.
Through this, I get my guidance.

Dear Sisters and Brothers,
My wish for you, is that the peace of God may give you strength and hearten you.
May He be the enticing goal before your eyes.
May He be the driving strength in your hearts.
And may He be the supporting ground under your feet.

I wish you blessed days throughout Christmastime.

Bishop Harald Rückert