



## Christmas Greetings from Bishop Pedro Suarez

December, 2018

There's a story that's told about a young boy who approaches his father with a question. "Dad," the little boy asks, "How big is God?" The father pauses for a minute and then points to a passing airplane, way up in the sky. "God is as big as that airplane," the dad says. The boy, puzzled, looks at his dad and says, "well, that's not very big...that airplane is small!" The dad invites the boy to join him on a drive, and they go to an airport, where the dad takes the boy right up close to an airplane. With his nose close to the airplane, the boy looks all the way down to the right and then all the way down to the left, barely able to see the tip of the airplane either way. He stretches his arms up high and can barely even touch the wing above him. "How about now," the dad asks. The little boy says in amazement, "wow...that's HUGE!" "You see," the dad says, "the answer to your question is: it depends on how close you are."

As you think back on this year, and as you reflect on the state of the world today, does it sometimes feel to you as though God is far off? Does God appear small to you? Are you sometimes tempted to give in to the darkness and despair that is often pressing in from every side?

One of the classic prophetic texts that is frequently referenced during this holiday season is from the prophet Isaiah, speaking to and about his community: *The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2)*

While Christians often interpret this passage to be a prophecy of Christ, Jewish rabbi Rashi proposes that Isaiah was not referencing specifically Christ, but rather a person who actually lived during Isaiah's lifetime. Reflecting on Isaiah's prophecy, however, and given the life and legacy of Jesus of Nazareth, for us this text does point to Christ. Or maybe it's that the life and legacy of Christ points to this text. Either way, in this text we get a powerful message for us today: *the light has shined in the darkness.*

Because we know darkness, wouldn't you agree? We don't have to look far to identify...to touch...to be overwhelmed by darkness. The darkness of discord. The darkness of poverty and disease. The darkness of broken relationships and failed dreams. As one woman said: "Life is tough. You're born. You suffer. Then you die." *But those who lived in a land of deep darkness—on them light has shined.* As the Light shines in the darkness, God comes close to us. As God comes close to us, we discover that God is with us, accompanying us on our journey and ready to give direction. God comes close to us, and we discover that God is not as small as an airplane far off in the distance, but rather God is big.

**Dear friends, in the midst of the darkness, may you feel the presence of a God who loves you deeply, who walks with you closely, and who holds you firmly.** May the message of light shining in darkness bring you life and hope this Christmas. And may you sometimes get so close to this big God that you throw your head back and spread your arms wide and simply exclaim, "WOW!"