

# Bene Koytara Goyterey

Those who work for God's Kingdom (translated from Zarma)



*Dear Friends,*



Once again we have arrived in the last month of the year, the month of December, the period of advent and the celebration of Christmas. I always understood the period of advent as the period during which we prepare ourselves for the celebration of Christmas, the celebration of Christ being born, remembering the awesome and humanly incomprehensible fact that God came to live among us. And this also makes us think of the promise of the second coming, the return of Christ to make all things new. The progressive lighting of the 4 candles on each of the 4 advent Sundays are a visible "counting down to Christmas" and represents the coming of Christ as the light of the world. Only very recently I understood that besides those aspects, in certain Christian traditions a symbolic meaning is attributed to the four advent candles representing different aspects of the preparation toward Christmas.

1<sup>st</sup> week: Prophecy candle representing Hope

2<sup>nd</sup> week: Bethlehem candle representing Peace and Preparation

3<sup>rd</sup> week: Shepherds candle representing Joy

4<sup>th</sup> week: Angel's candle representing Love

When I looked up more information about this on the internet it encouraged me and I found it really meaningful to consider these aspects related to Christ's birth and life during this time of advent.

The year 2023 again has been a year full of work, activities, changes, expected events and unexpected (!) events, joyful events and sad events, etc. Life is busy and it's very easy to just get absorbed by all that is keeping me and us occupied from minute to minute, from hour to hour, all through the days and months of the year. So much so, that another year is over in what seems to be only a short period of time. The other day I was talking with my friend Debora Zagre and we agreed that it makes us sad that we see so little of each other and find so little opportunity to spend some quality time together.

And so, while I was reading through the information I found about the four advent candles and the meaning attributed to them, it felt like taking a deep breath. I identified with the meaningfulness of the contemplation of the different aspects related to Christ's life and birth in order to prepare for the celebration of Christmas. Taking a deep breath in the midst of our busy lives. In this way I want to prepare for a really meaningful Christmas celebration instead of it simply being another nice (christian) event on our annual calendar.

***We wish you all a beautiful and meaningful Advent and Christmas season and convey our good wishes to you for the year 2024!***



Below we also share with you some encouraging testimonies of a few participants at Training Centre Caleb and how their lives are being impacted because of the training.

## Changing lives



Shortly after the start of the new schoolyear at Training Centre Caleb, I (Blaise) went to Maradi for supervision. This is the third and last year for the present group and so it is all the more important that the work is done well to help everyone to consolidate and improve on everything they have learned thus far. At the same time I was curious to learn if they had been using their knowledge and skills during the holidays, in particular for those who also do the discipleship training and come from villages farther away. It was really encouraging to hear what several of those young women and girls shared while we sat together and talked.

**Penina:**

While I was at home during the holidays I made some clothing for my sisters and my parents. I also knitted baby clothing and sold those. And I made bedsheets and the types of cloth for carrying babies.

When I first came to Soura<sup>[1]</sup> I did not really know how to read and write. But now, thanks to the literacy classes, I can read well and I'm even teaching others at home as well as some women of my church.

I also learned how to do the deep cleaning of the face and how to make perfumes. I furthermore learned better how to cook, like making the Hausa type of porridge and several other good dishes.

**Esther:**

During the holidays I worked on several things like sewing for my younger sisters and myself, and also the embroidery of bedsheets to sell as well as hoods for babies and young children for the cold season.



**Rabi:**

While I was in the village during the holidays, I sew clothing for myself, for my nieces and also for the women of the church. They had their women's day during that time and I sew all the uniforms for the day. It paid very well.

I knitted baby clothing to sell and also the hoods for the cold season.

I started teaching my younger sister how to make the product for the deep cleaning of the face and how to knit. She now knows

well how to do things like deep cleaning of the face. She does it for weddings and earns money that way. I also made bedsheets to give to one of my friends who had a baby.

It's just wonderful to see the change in the lives of these girls and young women. Whereas before they started their training they did not really have productive activities, now, even before finishing their training, they have become productive, they use their creativity and several were able to earn income. And it is also very encouraging to hear several of them share about how they have started to use what they have learned to teach others. Moreover, through what these young women and girls were sharing and especially how they were sharing it (I was mentally comparing it to how they were when they started the training 2 years ago), portrayed for me extent to which the training (both the professional training and the discipleship training) is helping them to blossom, to develop who they are as a person. This is what we want to see happening and this is what we know will help these girls and young women to make a positive contribution to their families and their communities.

<sup>[1]</sup> Soura Dan Nana is the name of the village on the outskirts of Maradi where Training Centre Caleb is located. Instead of referring to it as 'Training Centre Caleb', the place usually is referred to as 'Soura'.

## To thank for:

- The impact of the training programme at Training Centre Caleb on the lives of the participants;
- That throughout the year we've been able to continue our work and activities, despite a period of uncertainty following the coup d'état;
- The sufficiency of the means available to us to live and do our work over the past year.

## To pray for:

- The country and its government, that wise decisions regarding political and socio-economic issues will be made;
- That we will continue to examine the pertinence of the work we're involved in;
- Good preparations for Caleb for his next steps after finishing secondary school in June;
- For provision of sufficient means for our life and work throughout the next year.

With our love,

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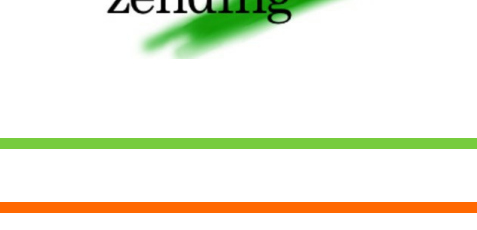
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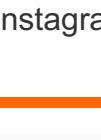
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