Dear Comrade Citizens, Friends, Allies, and Acquaintances,

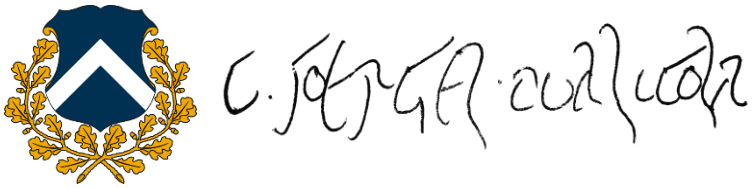
Jesus of Nazareth's birthday has arrived once more this year and, unfortunately, I cannot be with you all in person or online. But I wanted to share with you a brief message of good tidings and great joy this holiday season, as Sandum citizens celebrate the birth of their lord and some celebrate the season's many holidays, from Hanukkah to Kwanzaa and the birthday of the god Sol Invictus.

Though I may not be a member of your flock, I wish to share with you a story that I heard while I was practicing *nyungné* (a fasting ritual) last month. Then, one of the laypeople of my sangha struck up a conversation with the lama leading our retreat about a theological topic, about Buddhists' attitude toward Jesus's divinity. Recalling something the Venerable Khenpo Kathar Rinpoche said, our lama from Wisconsin, US, admitted he had asked Khenpo the same thing. Khenpo's response was to say that Jesus was a *bodhisattva*, a view held by many Buddhists.

Jesus's message can be understood by all people, of all walks of life, and of many different backgrounds: his message was a human message, not just a Christian message. (Of course, Jesus would never have said his message was even "Christian!") Jesus has inspired us to be more compassionate to those we meet, to be forgiving to those who have trespassed against us, and to lead us away from temptation and sin—something Buddhists like myself would call *dukkha*. These values are not just Christian values; they can be shared by anyone of any religion. The same hope that Jesus has inspired in some, he can inspire in others, and there is something very Sandum in rejoicing and celebrating the hope and humanity of all peoples.

This season is a time to be spent with friends and family, and this is the reason why I cannot be with you this year out of all the others. This past year has been one of ups and downs in my family. Like some of you, I have shared in the happiest moments of my innate and chosen families at weddings and births this year, while two days later I have gone to a relative's funeral. Fortuna is a capricious goddess, but with our friends and families—both near and far—we Sandum People can endure the good and the bad of our lives. Sandus is here through the thick and thin.

This Christmas, I am celebrating the holiday away from my loving boyfriend, Oliver. Like some of you who may feel alone and unwelcome this holiday season, please do know that I am thinking of you and that I hope to be there with you. Please feel free to personally message me! And in the New Gregorian Year, I will rejoin you, as the Sanôba will join me, and for that I am very glad.

Next year is an important year for us, too, as a country. Victorious May will mark the tenth anniversary of our micronation, an astounding achievement for a group of such young but pensive and dedicated people. This anniversary and this holiday will allow us to double our efforts to achieving a world free of suffering—much like that of the good news of Jesus's passion.

Happy Holidays!