



Diocese of Port Pirie Chancery

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Pastoral Letter to the Christian Faithful of the Diocese of Port Pirie for the Feast of Christmas

Dear Sisters & Brothers

Reflect how much we need the annual Feast of Christmas. It comes and acts like a recharging of the soul. There is so much that can get us down but the annual reminder through the beauty of the Church's Scriptures and Liturgy that God so loved us, no matter how unworthy we might appear to be, that He sent His only Son, gives us again our focus.

Here is a great mystery. In contemplating us God in some way sees His own image, as He has made us in His likeness, as Scripture says. Nothing can take that away from us. Christmas is the Feast of the greatest affirmation of any of us.

Pope Francis has some beautiful reflections on Christmas. He asked one Christmas Eve "on this Holy Night, while we contemplate the infant Jesus just born and placed in the manger, we are invited to reflect: How do I welcome the tenderness of God... the question put to us simply by the Infant's presence is: Do I allow God to love me?..." Francis then asks us whether we have the courage to also welcome with tenderness those near us who are different. How do we show to those others the warmth of God?

We are told that there are twelve abortions a day in South Australia. What a year full of misery and killing that adds up to? We have celebrated one hundred years since the end of World War I, the war to end all wars. What was there to celebrate? Twenty-one years later we were at it again with World War II. How long has it taken to budge the hearts of our politicians over the children on Nauru? But against all this we must place the tenderness of God, and what the Pope calls His cascade of mercy - born in a family, just as we were, nurtured by the love of parents, growing up with neighbours and relatives, God so affirmed us in that first Christmas through the birth of His Son that we must never lose confidence in the ability of good to triumph, for the light of Christ outshines any darkness, public or personal. The Word was made flesh, "and pitched His tent amongst us", as Scripture says. Because God sees Godself in us and in the newborn Jesus we are all gifted beyond compare.

In Him

+ Gregory O'Kelly SJ
Bishop of the Diocese of Port Pirie

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