



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON

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10 December 2018

Priests, sisters and parishioners of the Diocese

Dear Brothers and Sisters

Re: Christmas Message: 'He will proclaim justice to the nations.'

Joy, hope and peace!

In Prague, there is a frequently visited church which contains a statue of the Infant Jesus. Outside, there is a collage of stories of parishioners who worshipped in this church. The story of Helena, born in 1936, shares her story of Archbishop Joseph Beran. During the second world war, he spent three years in the Nazi concentration camp of Dachau. In 1945, at the end of the second world war after he was released from prison, he went around the country confirming all the young people. Within two years, the communist regime imprisoned him again, for 16 years until 1965 when he was allowed to travel to Rome and was made a Cardinal: but he was never allowed back home. Helena remembers the Archbishop who confirmed her and prepared her for a tough life under a communist regime that imposed restrictions on people for practicing their faith and continue to have hope in the God who is with us in Jesus Christ.

As I travel around the Diocese, I meet good folk going about their daily lives living this Christmas message knowing that God is with us.

Yet many in our region have experienced great drought –and wondering if the rains will ever come. Still many of our folk are caught in violent domestic situations, in refugee camps, unemployment, and homelessness. And most recently, the catastrophic bushfires that have destroyed homes, forests, livelihoods and livestock.

We can recall when Jesus was born, it was in a world of violence, injustice, displacement, oppression and persecution.

Yet his message of Joy, Hope and Peace was etched in the lives of the parishioners of Prague and is his gift to us to sustain us and face the challenges of our Diocese to ensure that the values of Christianity are restored through our continued endeavours.

Our country has this year experienced legislation in our parliaments which leaves human life at its very beginning and at its end, vulnerable. It has been a great challenge to all of us in the church. I am deeply appreciative of all you who wrote and contacted local politicians and encouraged your friends to write as well. I admire those politicians who stood up and voted against the legislation and I personally thank

Bishop Michael McCarthy

those politicians for their courage and for their commitment. The passing of the legislation on the Termination of Pregnancy Bill will go down as one of the saddest days in the history of this state, the day when our parliamentarians, 51 to 40 with one abstention, voted to legalise abortion up to and beyond 22 weeks. I am sad that we have a parliament that enacts life-denying legislation. Euthanasia is next on the agenda. I encourage all Catholics and indeed all Christians, and those of other life-affirming religions to use their vote wisely at the next election and remember who voted for this legislation. We cannot afford to be complacent on these issues.

Many families and communities have also experienced personal loss of loved ones and will spend this Christmas grieving. You are all in my prayers.

The Christmas story gives us hope – hope that we can stand together and live our faith through all adversity and be encouraged by our brothers and sisters who generation upon generation stood up and were countered as life-affirming followers of Jesus.

May Christ who was born in Bethlehem amidst turmoil be our strength.
God bless you all.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michael McCarthy". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.