



# 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

Four points about Christmas. Firstly, it is the Feast of Affirmation. No matter what people don't think of us, what failures have beset us in life, how harsh some people are with us, God so loved the world, God so loved me, yes, barnacles and all, that God sent His only Son to love and die for me. The immensity of God became a mewling baby, for me, Omnipotence became Vulnerability, Spirit became weak flesh. For me. What greater affirmation?

Secondly, it is the Feast of Family. The family is our human context, endorsed by The Son of God being born in such human circumstances. The Messiah was born not in a pretty Nativity scene, but in the context of beasts, of sheep manure, urine, cow pats, dirty straw. Where was Mary to lie down that was clean? But it was a family, the context of all our lives. He was like us, in all things but sin.

Thirdly, it is the Feast of Children. They are born for joy and love and care. Christ took on their form and grew as children do – discovery, learning, rejoicing, playing, singing, throwing a tantrum, smothering with love. May our Church be the safest of places for children. We cannot do much except our prayer for the murdered little ones in Aleppo, but how can we have children behind wire, in detention, in this our Lucky Country? Ask our politicians.

Fourthly, Newspeak and some politicians and the social engineers are dropping the word Christmas. I received a card with two kookaburras on it, wishing me joy for the Festive Season! But not to mention Christ at Christmas is like talking about a wedding and not mentioning the bride or groom! How daft! Be positive. Say to people not just "Happy Christmas", but "enjoy the birthday of Christ".

For all our diocese, many blessings. For you in particular, grace and peace at this time of the birth of Christ amongst us.

In Him

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

20<sup>th</sup> December 2016