



Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide

Apostolic Administrator



Pastoral Letter to the Christian Faithful of the Diocese of Port Pirie and the Archdiocese of Adelaide for the Feast of Christmas 2019

Hope Born Again

Dear Sisters and Brothers

How do we find joy in Christmas when we are reeling from the unspeakably sad and tragic deaths on White Island? How do we celebrate at a time when we are grieving the loss of beautiful lives and the shocking burns to others? How do we rejoice in the Feast of Family when so many families are in grief?

Tragedy can occur at Christmas. A loved one of the family is killed or dies just before Christmas. A car accident involves someone on the way home for Christmas, bringing grief not joy. Even the first Christmas saw terrible suffering of families in the slaughter of the Innocents.

At Christmas some might have to pray to the suffering Christ, 'within Thy wounds hide me'.

The truth still stands that God so loved us that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but will have eternal life.

Despite all grief, Christmas centres us. It calls us back to the truth of who we are. We are born again in hope, because the Lord of all creation came to stand next to us in the form of the most defenceless of creatures, a baby.

Around the Christ Child there were shepherds and animals. They represented the high and the mighty, the rich and the poor, the lonely and the despised. Each of us reflects the image of Christ, and each has a dignity that can never be taken away, even by death.

Our vulnerability, and the fragility of human life, has been starkly exposed by the White Island tragedy. There are still forces in our society militating against life, at either its beginning or its end, but the tender love of God is reflected in the Child Jesus, despite at times the darkness of the night, a darkness which on that first occasion was transformed by a Star and the heavenly light.

In Him

+ Gregory O'Kelly SJ
Apostolic Administrator of the Archdiocese of Adelaide
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17th December 2019
19/809
