

2022 Christmas message from Archbishop Patrick O'Regan, Catholic Archbishop of Adelaide

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Many are the depictions of Saint Joseph, and most often he is depicted with the child Jesus. There is Joseph at the manger scene; Joseph holding the child Jesus in his arms; Joseph instructing the young boy Jesus; Joseph guiding the young Jesus in the carpenter's shop etc.

I thought I had seen them all. That was until I came to Adelaide and visited St Joseph's Chapel in Mary Mackillop Precinct, where there is to be found a marvellous representation of Joseph and the child Jesus. They are both standing, with Joseph behind Jesus; Jesus reaches one hand up behind himself to hold Joseph; Joseph reaches down placing his hand in reassuring calm on the child Jesus. It is Joseph as protector and encourager and reassurer. Joseph is clothed in a dark brown tunic, the Christ Child in brilliant white.

After another year of difficulty at home and abroad we shall soon gather once more to remember the birth of a child filled with hope and promise. In churches across Adelaide we will join fellow believers all over the world and celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Prince of Peace, who preached goodwill toward all.

His birth is the light that gives us hope for this present world in spite of disunity, abuse, hatred, violence, poverty, greed and corruption. Hope is important in times such as ours where families struggle with the cost of living, some homeless and suffering hunger; where climate change threatens the gift of God's creation. We look across the globe with concern at battles that rage in Ukraine.

At such times it can feel as if we are alone, that nobody stands behind us. Yet into that fear, into that darkness comes the Promised One, the light who is Christ, the light which becomes the light that lights our way toward justice and peace. Even when our own wicks burn dimly, the Word of God, Jesus, withstands the darkness, gently urges us forward.

Allow me to finish with a quote from Pope Francis who says:

'Christmas reveals the immense love of God for humanity. From that flows also the enthusiasm, the hope of us Christians, that in our poverty we know that we are loved, we are visited, accompanied by God.'

Like that great depiction of Joseph standing behind Jesus, this Christmas may we know the reassuring presence of Christ in our lives, especially in times of fear and uncertainty.

A blessed Christmas to you and your families. God is Good, Good indeed.