



Catholic Diocese of Geraldton

Bishop of Geraldton W.A.

BISHOP MICHAEL MORRISSEY 2023 CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

“The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light; on those who live in the land of deep shadow a light has shone.”

These words we hear from the prophet Isaiah at the Christmas Mass are very relevant for our times. Many places in our world are currently caught up in division, turmoil, conflict and war and there is terrible loss of life and homes on every side.

As we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ over 2000 years ago in Bethlehem, we may find ourselves pondering on ‘Where is the light of hope and joy for people living in darkness and uncertainty?’

There was a wonderful example from the First World War, which was meant to be the war that ended all Wars in Europe. On the Western front around the time of the first Christmas of World War I in 1914, soldiers from both sides of the conflict stopped fighting and exchanged greetings, presents, and even played a soccer game for a brief time. They didn’t see themselves as enemies but fellow human beings.

You can well imagine their action, filled with hope and peace, was very much frowned upon by military leaders. The decision to step up out of the despair of the trenches was not made by political leaders, or those in power, but by ordinary folk who primarily just wanted to live lives in peace and in honour of the birth of the Christ Child who came to bring peace.



This cross still stands in Belgium as a constant reminder of the WW1 Christmas Truce in December 2014.

It was the ordinary people who, in that moment in time, gave to each other the gift of joy and a glimmer of hope in what seemed impossible. For us it is a reminder of the very deep desire within human beings to want to live in peace.

That is one the powers of Christmas and why it is so special. People of all walks of life and levels of faith, recognise the importance of coming together as families or as friends, to celebrate the gift of life, hope and peace, *“..as part of the universe, called into being by one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect” [Laudato Si 89].*

Jesus came into our world encouraging us to leave behind those things that divide, diminish and hinder, and to choose a life filled with hope and joy. No matter how dark things seem, or how difficult things are, an ‘ordinary’ person has the power to choose a gesture of kindness and goodwill over an act of indifference or hostility. Choose to bring joy and hope in that moment and not despair or anger. Even if it can only be for a moment. A simple message of Christmas, which will never be suppressed, is that God’s love is eternal and present to each one of us in all the acts of kindness and the goodwill in our communities, families and friends.

May you have a blessed and happy Christmas as, with the angels, praise God singing, ***“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace, goodwill among people”.***