

## **Catholic News - Editorial – November 2023**

### **The True Meaning of Christmas**

The world in which we live is in need of joy and hope right now. Our Advent waiting has enabled the joy and hope manifested in the Christ child to come into our midst. God is with us.

Every year seems to bring with it challenges of all kinds. This year is no different. 2023 has again presented the world with scenarios that have taken us to the brink. Wars abound, and according to some commentators, we have entered into a bleak environment.

The war in Ukraine and the Middle East and the ongoing after-effects, high food and fuel prices, the fight against inflation, the transition to renewable energy and China's uncertain post-pandemic path, the increasing aggression on the part of some governments are destabilising. The continuing existence of COVID-19 and other viruses, poverty, oppression, the inequality of wealth, the abuse of power, racism and many other challenges can depress the world psyche.

Yet, into this mess always comes the joy and hope of Jesus Christ. The true hope that Christmas brings is nothing less than "eternal life". As Pope Francis has said: "When we speak about hope, often we refer to what is not in our power to accomplish, and to what is not visible to us. Indeed, what we hope for is beyond our power and our gaze. But the birth of Christ, by inaugurating the Redemption, speaks to us about a different hope, a trustworthy hope and one that is visible and understandable because it is founded in 'God'."

In the birth of Jesus, God entered into the world and gives us the strength to walk with Him. We walk with him toward the fullness of life. This walk will give us strength even though it may be tiring.

The world and its people are tired now, so Christ has come with perfect timing. When we stay close to Christ, we have that reassurance that we do not walk alone in this world. The world can dish up as we have seen some terrible head winds, but the believer embraces a hope that never stops and one that propels us toward the Father who is waiting for us.

This year in North Queensland we have our local home-grown challenges too. Our Church is not immune from its particular challenges either. We have already engaged with Parishes and provided assistance to parishioners as to how they can become new in Christ.

The hope that Christ brings into our world, our community, our Church, our circumstances is literally "good news". Our job as Christians and always is to become "good news" to others with Christ as our foundation. The life of Christ can become our life – a life of meaning – a life of hope.

This is what God brings us today. Our world is not a dead stump where we find it hard to see a sprout. This is a jaundiced view of the world. Christmas is God's message to the world and to each human being.

To quote Pope Francis again: "Christ's coming is like the birth of a child which is such a joyous and exciting occasion that it makes us think nothing of weakness, discomfort and sleepless nights. This is what Christmas is: the birth of Jesus is the newness that enables us to be reborn each year and to find in him, the strength needed to face every trial." We face trials every day, but never alone.

May we gather at Christmas in Church this year to truly welcome the One who shines a light into the darkness.

Blessings to you all.

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