

Archbishop Prowse: Christmas Message 2024

This year, within the space of a few days, we celebrate both Christmas Day (25th December) and the Opening of the Jubilee Year of Pilgrims of Hope (29th December). Both unite together under one word: HOPE.

Pope Francis reminds us of St Paul's reassuring statement regarding HOPE. "Hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us." (Romans 5/5)

Recently, we have all received this love of God poured out in our Archdiocesan Assembly. Our prayerful HOPE was realised in a refreshing way. This synodal gathering enabled us to encounter the Holy Spirit afresh. Our HOPE is that this will deepen in the times ahead.

This "pouring out" of God's love in our hopes arrives again this Christmas. Hope takes form in love itself – the Christ child. Like the first Christmas and including all creation, there is a holy silence. There is peace. There is hope for an end to warfare and all violence in our world. There is gift-giving in our lives in response to Godly grace in Jesus. There is the Holy Family animating in hope all families.

Days after the first Christmas, there is the synodal pilgrimage of exile into Egypt via present-day devastated Gaza. From these ruins, we become Pilgrims of Hope in a new world of peacemaking and justice. We start in our families and neighbourhoods.

Pope Francis names the following groups for our special hope-filled attention in practical charity – prisoners, sick, young, migrants, elderly, (grandparents), poor.

Let us start with our homes. May they be truly places of H.O.P.E. Homes of Prayer Experience. Start by gathering around your nativity sets and pray together in perfect silence, stillness and simplicity.

Hope does not disappoint. Hope leads us to Bethlehem. Hope leads us to become synodal pilgrims. We walk behind Jesus, who leads us into 2025 with bountiful hope.

Happy Christmas and New Year to all!

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