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MOST REV ANTHONY RANDAZZO DD JCL

BISHOP OF BROKEN BAY

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE 2025

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Across many lands there is a venerable and beautiful custom: at the Christmas table, a place is set but left empty.

It is a quiet sign of welcome for the unexpected guest, perhaps a stranger, perhaps someone in need.

Such a simple gesture, yet it speaks profoundly of the goodness of an open heart and a willingness to receive and to share.

In the busyness that so often accompanies Christmas, we can lose sight of these small but powerful symbols.

The empty chair itself draws us back to the very first Christmas, when Mary and Joseph found no room at the inn.

Into that humble setting, God chose to enter our world as a tiny child, carried by a young mother who dared to say “yes,” and protected by Joseph, who trusted the message of an angel.

The place prepared for the Christ Child was nothing more than a manger, an open box where animals were fed, yet it became the cradle of our salvation.

His birth in such unassuming surroundings was not only the fulfilment of ancient prophecy; it was the dawn of a hope that shines in every darkness, a mercy that heals the wounded heart, and a love that endures beyond all telling.

Often at this time of year, countless people feel overwhelmed by financial strain, social pressures, or the uncertainties of our times.

Year after year, we find ourselves speaking of conflict, fear, and suffering, now felt with heartbreaking clarity in recent days when the brutal Bondi massacre devastated families and shattered communities.

And yet, Christmas proclaims a hope that cannot be silenced.

This Holy Year of Hope was never intended to distract us from the world’s sorrows, but rather to teach us that no darkness, however deep, has the final word.

So, this Christmas, as we give thanks for God’s greatest gift to the whole of humanity, may our parishes, families, and communities become *living Bethlehems*, places where the tenderness, humility, and peace of Jesus Christ are encountered anew.

And may we always keep a place at our tables, and in our hearts, for those in need.

I pray that the graces poured out upon us in this Jubilee of Hope will lead us into the coming year with renewed confidence in our Saviour, who draws near to us always.

May you and your loved ones enjoy a holy and blessed Christmas Season.