

## Bishop Vincent's Christmas Message 2025

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Peace be with you this Christmas 2025!

Christmas is about birth, new beginnings and regeneration and the wonder of newborn life. Mary, the Mother of God, yet also a young pregnant woman, was probably afraid, suffering, in a strange place. The no-doubt-anxious Joseph, hovering around, maybe running off to get clean cloths as the birth approached. The baby boy, born in blood and tears and happiness as all babies are, time without end.

And then the explosion of joy at this beginning - angels in the sky, a beacon star, kneeling shepherds and later, grave Magi bringing royal gifts.

Christmas is all this – the joy, the pain, the fear, the expectation, the utter humanity of birth – the everyday miracle and an even greater miracle. God has become one of us and now dwells amongst us forever!

However, Christmas does not just console us with the proclamation of the Emmanuel -God-dwelling-among-us. It also challenges us to act to transform our world. God comes among us not in a parade of power and glory. Rather he chooses to immerse himself fully with our human condition, embracing the trials and tribulations of life. Therefore, reclaiming the Christmas spirit means none other than to imitate God's radical solidarity even at the risk of jeopardising our own status and privilege.

Let's never forget that our God, the maker of all things visible and invisible, was reduced to the most vulnerable of creatures; another little Middle Eastern boy caught up in homelessness, poverty and a cruel cycle of violence.

Christmas then, above all, is the special time when we remember our God-given duty to transform the world and our grave responsibility to become peacemakers.

The very first words of our new Holy Father Pope Leo XIV, as Pope, are worth recalling:

*Peace be with all of you! Dearest brothers and sisters, this is the first greeting of the Risen Christ, the good shepherd who gave his life for God's flock. I, too, would like this greeting of peace to enter your hearts, to reach your families, and all people, wherever they are, all of the people, all over the earth... This is the peace of the Risen Christ, an unarmed peace and a disarming peace, humble and persevering. It comes from God, God who loves us all unconditionally.*

Yes, our violent chaotic planet desperately needs this peace of Christ!

Daily our hearts continue to break, when we see the violence especially to children, in places like Gaza, Ukraine and Myanmar.

We cannot just watch all this suffering in front of our eyes passively. We must act then as disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, in the spirit of the Beatitudes, to bring about real change. Together as the Body of Christ, we can make a difference.

My prayer, therefore, is that each of you will feel God's closeness and become instruments of peace in the New Year ahead.

With Pope Leo and St Francis of Assisi, in this holy season of goodwill and peace, we pray:  
Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

**Bishop Vincent Long OFM Conv**  
Bishop of Parramatta