



Diocese of Port Pirie

Chancery

PO Box 1206, Port Pirie, Sth Australia, 5540
Email: diocoffice@pp.catholic.org.au

Phone: 08 8632 0550

Fax: 08 8632 0599

A Pastoral Letter to the Christian Faithful of the Diocese of Port Pirie

'Hope Born Again'

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ Jesus

It is Christmas time again, thank God, and our hearts grow fuller. There is a magic to Christmas, as you can see in the eyes of children. For us adults it is also the time of grace. Christmas centres us. Christmas calls us back to the truth of who we are, and our hearts grow fuller because there is a recharge of hope and confidence that flows into those hearts. Amid the clamour and clash of the forces that drive our society, into our hearts there flows the stillness we need from the Silent Night, Holy Night. We are born again in hope.

The decorations went up in the Adelaide well before October finished. It is the face of the commercial Christmas, the shell without real substance. Without beating a drum of doom we know we live in a society in Australia that is commercialised, over sexualised, and increasingly secularised. These forces make us live on the outside of ourselves, where we can be seduced by their flavour. These forces take us away from the centre of ourselves, from our interior lives, our spirituality, our lives of faith and love.

A birth is about life. At Christmas we celebrate the birth of God amongst us, whose Son gave us a promise of the fullness of life. We celebrate this birth of the Saviour in a time when our parliamentarians are talking about euthanasia. So we celebrate birth and life at a time when others are talking about death and killing.

During his visit to Britain the Holy Father reminded his listeners that without our lives of love and faith and values, without an attention to our interior lives, we will stay and evolve further into a truncated humanity, a humanity that is without full meaning.

Christmas is the birth of Jesus, and a rebirth for us. God so loved the world He sent His only Son. His Son came to us in the context of a family, reminding us that despite the pressures that erode family life, a family was the context for the birth of the Saviour. Every Christmas reminds a mother and father of the dignity of their vocation, because it was the love of a man and a woman that created the context for the birth of Christ.

All the bits and pieces of humanity came to Bethlehem – the high and the mighty (the Magi) and the lowly and the very poor (the shepherds). They were the young, the middle-aged and the elderly. The beasts in their dumbness in the stable represented the truth that all creation can adore Him. "O come let us adore Him". Christmas reminds us of the human need we have to adore, because God created us in His image, and we must reflect the design planted in our hearts, that in order to be fully human we must praise, reverence and serve Him who came among us in such lowliness and poverty.

Your Servant in Christ

Bishop Gregory O'Kelly SJ
Bishop of the Diocese of Port Pirie