



Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Office of the Bishop

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Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

The opening lines of the Scripture readings on Christmas Eve describe our present reality as we live with a global pandemic. The universal experience of all people being in a land of deep darkness also shines a spotlight on our interconnected vulnerability. Christmas is where the glimmer of a horizon of hope dawns in the midst of this global pandemic. *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shone.” (Isaiah 9:2)*

Once again, Scripture remind us of the words of the angel who announced to the shepherds keeping watch over their flock by night. *“Do not be afraid; for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is the Christ, the Lord”.* (Luke 2:10) Yes, a baby born on the margins of society is the great light because God’s love breaks into the darkness of exclusion, indifference and fear and announces hope that shepherds and magi will meet, not as isolated strangers but as sisters and brothers. The meeting, or perhaps the journey, is one that must begin anew, by building a culture of encounter. The shepherds (the poorest) and the magi (the richest) both came to a place of life changing encounter, they discovered the Messiah, the Saviour, the Prince of Peace. In that little light shining forth from a manger they discovered each other in the common goal as announced by an angelic choir, *“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favours.” (Luke 2:14)*

The pandemic has invited all people of good will to look more deeply at the disparity and the virus of global and domestic injustice. Meister Eckhart OP expressed, in one of his sermons on Christmas night, *“What good is it to me if Mary gave birth to the Son of God 1400 years ago and I don’t give birth to God’s Son in my person and my culture and my times”.*

Strange as it may seem, we are fortunate to live this Christmas during the tragic events of the pandemic. The realities of our circumstances, the pomp, ostentation, crowds and unbridled consumption has been diminished, thereby encouraging us to focus on a solitary isolated family in a manger on the margins of Bethlehem. The margins of a solitary isolated elder in a tiny room of a long-term care home, along with all the other isolations of the global pandemic, have become the manger of the Holy Family in our midst.

I pray that this Christmas season may be the new beginning of our own discovery of Jesus. May it be an invitation to journey down a new road and a commitment to a Saviour and world beyond my own. May you, your families, and neighbours be companions on the journey towards a horizon of hope and love, made visible in a stable on the outskirts of a tiny town. Merry Christmas!

In Communion of prayer for each of you,

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Most Reverend Gary Gordon
Bishop of Victoria