



CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF ROCKHAMPTON

Prot: 22366:MMsp_1704

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

I write this letter at the start of December as during Advent this year I am travelling on our Diocesan pilgrimage to the Holy Land. We will visit the Church of the Nativity built over the stable where Jesus was born. Inside a silver star in the floor marks the exact spot where Christ was born and the Latin inscription on the star reads "*Hic de Virgine Maria Jesus Christus Natus Est*". Translated "*Here Jesus Christ was born to the Virgin Mary*". We also are able to visit Shepherd's Field where the angels appeared to the shepherds on the first Christmas night (Luke 2:8-16). Two thousand years ago the angels appeared to announce the coming of God with us, and we still celebrate this special event today.

The last few years have drawn us away and challenged us in the faith we have always known, having to connect at times in different ways and not always having the support of the community around us. Christ did not come into the world alone. He was greeted by his family, the angels, the shepherds working the fields and soon after the Magi. He then grew up among his people and went on to fulfil his ministry – gathering a group around him, teaching, healing, guiding and eventually dying among the people. He did all of this for us and among the brokenness of us.

Christmas is a time to be together. After having been kept apart over the last few years I ask you all this year to come back and meet Christ again this Christmas as part of our communities. Our faith communities, gathered around the table to receive Christ in Word and Sacrament, are not complete without you. While it is marvellous to be able to walk in-person among the sites of Christ's coming, it is also just as significant to come and share the nativity story gathered together here, to greet Christ among all of us.

I pray that you may all enjoy the peace and joy of Christmas.

Yours sincerely

Most Rev Michael McCarthy
Bishop of Rockhampton

Bishop Michael McCarthy

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